

THE

RICHARD MANSFIELD

ACTING VERSION

OF

PEER GYNT

By HENRIK IBSEN



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CHARACTERS

PEER GYNT	FIRST ELDERLY PEASANT
ASE, <i>his mother</i>	SECOND ELDERLY PEASANT
ASLAK, <i>the blacksmith</i>	AN ELDERLY WOMAN
MADS MOEN, <i>the bridegroom</i>	ANOTHER ELDERLY WOMAN
HIS FATHER	THE GREEN CLAD WOMAN
HIS MOTHER	THE DOVRE KING
SOLVEIG	FIRST TROLL IMP
HELGA, <i>her sister</i>	SECOND TROLL IMP
THEIR FATHER	THIRD TROLL IMP
THEIR MOTHER	THE UGLY BRAT
THE HEGSTAD FARMER	KARI, <i>the cobbler's wife</i>
INGRID, <i>the bride,</i> <i>his daughter</i>	MR COTTON
FIRST PEASANT LAD	MONSIEUR BALLON
SECOND PEASANT LAD	HERR VON EBERKOPF
THIRD PEASANT LAD	HERR TRUMPETERSTRALE
FOURTH PEASANT LAD	ANITRA, <i>a dancing girl</i>
FIFTH PEASANT LAD	CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP
THE MASTER COOK	THE LOOKOUT
FIRST PEASANT GIRL	THE MATE
SECOND PEASANT GIRL	THE BOATSWAIN
THIRD PEASANT GIRL	THE SHIP'S COOK
FOURTH PEASANT GIRL	THE CABIN BOY
FIFTH PEASANT GIRL	THE STRANGE PASSENGER
	THE BUTTON MOULDER
	THE LEAN PERSON

*Wedding Guests, Peasants, Lads, Girls, Troll
Courtiers and Troll Maidens, Danc-
ing Girls, the Ship's Crew
and others*

THE SCENES.

PART I

Act I	<i>Scene 1</i>	Norway	Gynt's Home	The Mill House
	<i>Scene 2</i>		Hegstad Farm	
Act II	<i>Scene 1</i>	In the Mountains		
	<i>Scene 2</i>	The Hall of the Dovre King		
	<i>Scene 3</i>	In the Mountains		
Act III	<i>Scene 1</i>	Peer's Hut in the Forest		
	<i>Scene 2</i>	The Interior of Gynt's Home		

PART II

Act IV	<i>Scene 1</i>	Morocco	A Palm Grove on the Coast	
	<i>Scene 2</i>		An Oasis in the Desert	
Act V	<i>Scene 1</i>	Norway	A Vision of Solveig Waiting	
	<i>Scene 2</i>		On Board a Ship in the North Sea	
	<i>Scene 3</i>	Norway	Solveig's Hut	

Thirty years are supposed to have elapsed
between Parts I and II

PEER GYNT.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE FIRST

(A wooded hillside in the mountains of Norway. An old mill shed and Gynt's home)
(PEER GYNT, a strongly-built youth, comes down the pathway. His mother, ASE, a small, slightly-built woman, follows him, scolding angrily)

ASE.

Peer, you're lying.

PEER

(without stopping)

No, I am not!

ASE.

Well then, swear that it is true!

PEER.

Swear? Why should I?

ASE.

See, you dare not!
It's a lie from first to last

PEER
(*stopping*).

It is true—each blessed word!

ASE
(*confronting him*).

Don't you blush before your mother?
First you skulk among the mountains
monthlong in the busiest season,
stalking reindeer in the snows,
home you come then, torn and tattered,
gun amissing, likewise game;—
and at last, with open eyes,
think to get me to believe
all the wildest hunters'-lies!—
Well, where did you find the buck, then?

PEER.

West near Gendin¹

ASE
(*laughing scornfully*)
Ah! Indeed!

PEER.

Keen the blast towards me swept,
hidden by an alder-clump,
he was scraping in the snow-crust
after lichen—

¹ Pronounce *Yendeen*

ASE
(*as before*)
Doubtless, yes!

PEER

Breathlessly I stood and listened,
heard the crunching of his hoof,
saw the branches of one antler
Softly then among the boulders
I crept forward on my belly
Crouched in the moraine I peered up,—
such a buck, so sleek and fat,
you, I'm sure, have ne'er set eyes on

ASE.

No, of course not!

PEER.

Bang! I fired!
Clean he dropped upon the hillside.
But the instant that he fell
I sat firm astride his back,
gripped him by the left ear tightly,
and had almost sunk my knife-blade
in his neck, behind his skull—
when, behold! the brute screamed wildly,
sprang upon his feet like lightning,
with a back-cast of his head
from my fist made knife and sheath fly,
pinned me tightly by the thigh,
jammed his horns against my legs,
clenched me like a pair of tongs;—
then forthwith away he flew
right along the Gendin-Edge!

ASE
(*involuntary*).

Jesus save us——!

PEER.

Have you ever
chanced to see the Gendin-Edge?
Nigh on four miles long it stretches
sharp before you like a scythe
Down o'er glaciers, landslips, scaurs,
down the toppling grey moraines,
you can see, both right and left,
straight into the tarns that slumber,
black and sluggish, more than seven
hundred fathoms deep below you

Right along the Edge we two
clove our passage through the air

ASE
(*dizzy*).

Oh, God save me!

PEER.

All at once,
at a desperate, break-neck spot,
rose a great cock-ptarmigan,
flapping, cackling, terrified,
from the crack where he lay hidden
at the buck's feet on the Edge

Then the buck shied half around,
leapt sky-high, and down we plunged
both of us into the depths!

Mountain walls behind us, black,
and below a void unfathomed!

Downward rushed we, ever downward
But beneath us something shimmered,
whitish, like a reindeer's belly —
Mother, 'twas our own reflection
in the glass-smooth mountain tarn

ASE

(gasping for breath)

Peer! God help me—! Quickly, tell—!

PEER

Buck from over, buck from under,
 in a moment clashed together,
 scattering foam-flecks all around

There we lay then, floating, plashing,—
 But at last we made our way
 somehow to the northern shore,
 buck, he swam, I clung behind him —
 I ran homewards—

ASE

But the buck, dear?

PEER.

He's there still, for aught I know,—

(Snaps his fingers, turns on his heel, and
 catch him, and you're welcome to him!

ASE.

And you're neck you haven't broken?
 Haven't broken both your thighs?
 and your backbone, too, is whole?
 Oh, dear Lord—what thanks, what praise,
 should be thine who helped my boy!
 There's a rent, though, in your breeches,
 but it's scarce worth talking of
 when one thinks what dreadful things
 might have come of such a leap—!

*(Stops suddenly, looks at him open-mouthed and
 wide-eyed, cannot find words for some time, but
 at last bursts out)*

Oh, you devil's story-teller,
 Cross of Christ, how you can lie!
 All this screed you foist upon me,
 I remember now, I knew it
 when I was a girl of twelve
 Gudbrand Glesne it befell,
 never you,—

PEER

Me as well
 Such a thing can happen twice

ASE

(exasperated)

Yes, a lie, turned topsy-turvy,
 can be prinked and tinselled out,
 decked in plumage new and fine,
 till none knows its lean old carcass
 That is just what you've been doing,
 vamping up things, wild and grand,
 garnishing with eagles' backs
 and with all the other horrors,
 lying right and lying left,
 filling me with speechless dread,
 till at last I recognised not
 what of old I'd heard and known!

PEER

If another talked like that
 I'd half kill him for his pains.

ASE

(weeping)

Oh, would God I lay a corpse;
 would the black earth hold me sleeping!
 Prayers and tears don't bite upon him—
 Peer, you're lost, and ever will be!

PEER

Darling, pretty little mother,
you are right in every word,—
don't be cross, be happy——

ASE.

Silence!

Could I, if I would, be happy,
with a pig like you for son?
Think how bitter I must find it,
I, a poor defenceless widow,
ever to be put to shame!

(*Weeping again*)

How much have we now remaining
from your grandsire's days of glory?
Where are now the sacks of coin
left behind by Rasmus Gynt?
Ah, your father lent them wings,—
lavished them abroad like sand,
buying land in every parish,
driving round in gilded chariots
Where is all the wealth he wasted
at the famous winter-banquet,
when each guest sent glass and bottle
shivering 'gainst the wall behind him?

PEER.

Where's the snow of yester-year?

ASE.

Silence, boy, before your mother!
See the farmhouse! Every second
window-pane is stopped with clouts
Hedges, fences, all are down,
beasts exposed to wind and weather,
fields and meadows lying fallow,
every month a new restraint——

PEER

Come now, stop this old-~~v~~ -'s talk!
 Many a time has luck serv'd drooping,
 and spring up as high as ever!

ASE

(*Jumping again*)

Oh, God help me, smal'l's the profit
 you have been to me, you scamp!
 shaming me in all directions,
 fighting with the worst rascallions——

PEER

(*turning away from her*)

Let me be

ASE

(*following him*)

Can you deny
 that you were the foremost brawler
 in the mighty battle royal
 fought the other day at Lunde,
 when you raged like mongrels mad?
 Who was it but you that broke
 Blacksmith Aslak's arm for him,—
 or at any rate that wrenched one
 of his fingers out of joint?

PEER.

Who has filled you with such prate?

ASE

(*hoarily*)

Cottar Kari heard the yells!

PEER

(rubbing his elbow)

Maybe, but 'twas I that howled

ASE

You?

PEER.

Yes, mother,—I got beaten

ASE

What d'you say?

PEER.

He's limber, *he* is

ASE.

Who?

PEER.

Why Aslak, to be sure

ASE

Shame—and shame, I spit upon you!
Such a worthless sot as that,
such a brawler, such a sodden
dram-sponge to have beaten you!
What if he be ne'er so limber,
need you therefore be a weakling?

PEER.

Though I hammer or am hammered,—
still we must have lamentations

(Laughing)

Cheer up, mother—

ASE

What? You're lying
now again?

PEER.

Yes, just this once
Come now, wipe your tears away,—
(*Clenching his left hand.*)
see,—with this same pair of tongs,
thus I held the smith bent double,
while my sledge-hammer right fist—

ASE

Oh, you brawler! You will bring me
with your doings to the grave!

PEER.

No, you're worth a better fate,
better twenty thousand times!
Little, ugly, dear old mother,
you may safely trust my word,—
all the parish shall exalt you,
only wait till I have done—
something—something really grand!

ASE

(*contemptuously*)

You!

PEER.

Who knows what may befall one!

ASE.

Would you'd get so far in sense
one day as to do the darning
of your breeches for yourself!

PEER
(hotly).

I will be a king, a kaiser!

ASE.

Oh, God comfort me, he's losing
all the wits that he had left!

PEER.

Yes, I will! Just give me time!

ASE.

Give you time, you'll be a prince,
so the saying goes, I think!

PEER.

You shall see!

ASE

Oh, hold your tongue!
You're as mad as mad can be—

Ah, and yet it's true enough,—
something might have come of you,
had you not been steeped for ever
in your lies and trash and moonshine
Hegstad's girl was fond of you
Easily you could have won her
had you wooed her with a will—

PEER.

Could I?

ASE.

The old man's too feeble
not to give his child her way
(*Begins to cry again*)

Ah, my Peer!—a golden girl—
 land entailed on her! Just think,
 had you set your mind upon it,
 you'd be now a bridegroom brave,—
 you that stand here grimed and tattered!

PEER
(briskly)

Come, we'll go a-wooing, then!

ASE

Where?

PEER

At Hegstad!

ASE

Ah, poor boy,
 Hegstad way is barred to wooers!

PEER

How is that?

ASE

Ah, I must sigh!
 Lost the moment, lost the luck——

PEER.

Speak!

ASE
(sobbing).

While in the Wester-hills
 you in air were riding reindeer,
 here Mads Moen's¹ won the girl!

¹ Pronounce *Maass Moo-en*

PEER.

What! That women's-bugbear! He——!

ASE.

Ay, she's taking him for husband

PEER

Wait you here till I have harnessed
horse and waggon——

(Going)

ASE.

Spare your pains
They are to be wed to-morrow——

PEER.

Pooh, this evening I'll be there!

ASE

Fie now! Would you crown our miseries
with a load of all men's scorn?

PEER.

Never fear, 'twill all go well

(Shouting and laughing at the same time)

Mother, jump! We'll spare the waggon,
'twould take time to fetch the mare up——

(Lifts her up in h's arms)

ASE

Put me down!

PEER.

No, in my arms
I will bear you to the wedding!

ASE.

Put me down!

PEER

First to the wedding
Be my spokesman You're so clever,
talk to him, the old curmudgeon,
say Mads Moen's good for nothing——

ASE

Put me down!

PEER

And tell him then
what a rare lad is Peer Gynt

ASE.

Truly, you may swear to that!
Fine's the character I'll give you
I will tell them straight and plain——

PEER.

Will you?

ASE

(*kicking with rage*)
I won't stay my tongue
till the old man sets his dog
at you, as you were a tramp!

PEER

Hm, then I must go alone.

ASE.

Ay, but I'll come after you!

PEER

Mother dear, you haven't strength——

ASE.

Strength? When I'm in such a rage,
I could crush the rocks to powder!
Hu! I'd make a meal of flints!
Put me down!

PEER

You'll promise then——

ASE

Nothing! I'll to Hegstad with you!
They shall know you, what you are!

PEER

Then you'll even have to stay here.

(He puts her up on the roof ASE screams.)

ASE.

Lift me down!

PEER

Yes, if you'll listen——

ASE.

Rubbish!

PEER

Dearest mother, pray——

ASE.

Lift me down this moment, Peer!

PEER

If I dared, be sure I would.
 (Coming nearer)

Now remember, sit quite still.
 Do not sprawl and kick about,
 do not tug and tear the shingles,—
 else 'twill be the worse for you,
 you might topple down.

ASE

You beast!

PEER

Do not kick!

ASE.

I'd have you blown,
 like a changeling, into space¹¹

PEER

Mother, fie!

ASE.

Bah!

PEER

Rather give your
 blessing on my undertaking
 Will you? Eh?

ASE

I'll thrash you soundly,
 hulking fellow though you be!

¹¹ It is believed in some parts of Norway that "changelings" (elf-children left in the stead of those taken away by the fairies) can, by certain spells, be made to fly away up the chimney

PEER.

Well, good-bye then, mother dear!
Patience, I'll be back ere long

*(Is going, but turns, holds up his finger warningly,
and says)*

Careful now, don't kick and sprawl!
(Goes)

ASE.

Peer!—God help me, now he's off,
Reindeer-rider! Liar! Hei!
Will you listen!—No, he's striding
o'er the meadow——! *(Shrieks)* Help! I'm dizzy!
*(TWO OLD WOMEN, with sacks on their backs, come
down the path to the mill)*

FIRST WOMAN

Lord, who's screaming?

ASE.

It is I!

SECOND WOMAN

Ase! Well, you *are* exalted!

ASE.

Fetch a ladder;
I must be down! That devil Peer——

SECOND WOMAN

Peer! Your son?

ASE.

Now you can say
you have seen how he behaves

FIRST WOMAN

We'll bear witness

ASE.

Only help me,
straight to Hegstad I will hasten—

SECOND WOMAN.

Is he there?

FIRST WOMAN

You'll be revenged, then,
Aslak Smith will be there too.

ASE

(wringing her hands)

Oh, God help me with my boy,
they will kill him ere they're done!

SECOND WOMAN.

She is utterly demented.

(Calls up the hill)
Ervind! Anders! Hei! Come here!

A MAN'S VOICE

What's amiss?

SECOND WOMAN.

Peer Gynt has perched his
mother on the mill-house roof!

(END OF SCENE FIRST)

SCENE SECOND

(*The farm at Hegstad. In the background the dwelling house. The revelry of the wedding throng is heard from beyond the house. PEER GYNT enters.*)

PEER

There it lies, Hegstad
 Wonder if Ingrid's alone in the house now?
 No, to the farm guests are swarming like gnats —
 Hm, to turn back now perhaps would be wisest.
 Still they must titter behind your back,
 and whisper so that it burns right through you.

(*Moves a few steps away from the fence*)

Ah, if I'd only a good strong dram now
 Or if I could pass to and fro unseen —
 Or were I unknown.—Something proper and strong
 were the best thing of all, for the laughter don't bite then.
 (*Looks around suddenly as though afraid, then*
hides among the bushes. Some WEDDING
GUESTS pass, going towards the house)

A MAN

(*in conversation as they pass*).

His father was drunken, his mother is weak.

A WOMAN.

Ay, then it's no wonder the lad's good for nought.

(*They pass on PEER GYNT, his face flushed with shame, peers after them*)

PEER

(softly)

Was it me they were talking of?

(With a forced shrug)

Oh, let them chatter!

After all, they can't sneer the life out of my body.

(Casts himself down upon the heathery slope, lies for some time flat on his back with his hands under his head, gazing up into the sky.)

What a strange sort of cloud! It is just like a horse

There's a man on it too—and saddle—and bridle—

And after it comes an old crone on a broomstick

(Laughs quietly to himself)

It is mother. She's scolding and screaming You beast!

Her you, Peer Gynt— (His eyes gradually close) Ay, now she is frightened—

Peer Gynt he rides first, and there follow him many—

His steed it is gold-shod and crested with silver

Himself he has gauntlets and sabre and scabbard

His cloak it is long, and its lining is silken

Full brave is the company riding behind him

None of them, though, sits his charger so stoutly

None of them glitters like him in the sunshine—

Down by the fence stand the people in clusters, lifting their hats, and agape gazing upwards

Women are curtseying. All the world knows him, Kaiser Peer Gynt, and his thousands of henchmen

Sixpenny pieces and glittering shillings over the roadway he scatters like pebbles

Rich as a lord grows each man in the parish High o'er the ocean Peer Gynt goes a-riding

Engelland's Prince on the seashore awaits him, there too await him all Engelland's maidens

Engelland's nobles and Engelland's Kaiser, see him come riding and rise from their banquet

Raising his crown, hear the Kaiser address him—

ASLAK THE SMITH

(*to some other young men, passing along*)
 Just look at Peer Gynt there, the drunken swine——!

PEER

(*starting half up*)

What, Kaiser——!

THE SMITH

Up with you, Peer, my lad!

PEER

What the devil? The Smith! What do you want here?

THE SMITH

(*to the others*)

He hasn't got over the Lunde-spree yet

PEER

(*jumping up*)

You'd better be off!

THE SMITH

I am going, yes

But tell us, where have you dropped from, man?
 You've been gone six weeks Were you troll-taken, eh?

PEER

I have been doing strange deeds, Aslak Smith!

THE SMITH

(*winking to the others*).

Let us hear them, Peer!

PEER.

They are nought to you

THE SMITH
(*after a pause*)

You're going to Hegstad?

PEER
No.

THE SMITH

Time was
they said that the girl there was fond of you

PEER
You grimy crow——!

THE SMITH

(*falling back a little*)

Keep your temper, Peer!
Though Ingrid has jilted you, others are left,—
think—son of Jon Gynt! Come on to the feast,
you'll find there both lambkins and widows well on——

PEER.
To hell——!

THE SMITH

You will surely find one that will have you—
Good evening! I'll give your respects to the bride—
(*They go off, laughing and whispering*)

PEER
(*looks after them a while, then makes a defiant motion and turns half round*).
For my part, may Ingrid of Hegstad go marry
whomever she pleases It's all one to me.
(*Looks down at his clothes*)

My breeches are torn I am ragged and grim—
If only I had something new to put on now

(*Stamps on the ground*)

If only I could, with a butcher-grip,
tear out the scorn from their very vitals!

(*Two girls pass laughing Looks round suddenly*)
What was *that*? Who was it that tittered behind there?
Hm, I certainly thought—No, no, it was no one—
I'll go home to mother

(*The fiddles strike up for the dance*)

They're playing a dance!

(*Gazes and listens, his eyes glisten, he rubs his hands down his thighs*)

How the lasses do swarm! Six or eight to a man!
Oh, galloping death,—I must join in the frolic!—
But how about mother, perched up on the mill-house—

(*His eyes are drawn downward again, he leaps and laughs*)

Hei, how the Halling¹ flies over the green!
Ay, Guttorm, he *can* make his fiddle speak out!
It gurgles and booms like a foss² o'er a scaur
And then all that glittering bevy of girls!—
Yes, galloping death, I must join in the frolic!

(*Rushes across to join revelers beyond the house*)

(*WEDDING GUESTS throng the yard, lads and maidens dancing*)

A WOMAN.

The bride? Oh yes, she is crying a bit,
but that, you know, isn't worth heeding.

THE MASTER-COOK

(*in another group*).

Now then, good folk, you must empty the barrel

¹ A somewhat violent peasant dance

² Foss (in the North of England "force")—a waterfall

A MAN

Thanks to you, friend, but you fill up too quick

A LAD

(to the FIDDLER, as he flies past, holding A GIRL by the hand)

To it now, Guttorm, and don't spare the fiddlestrings!

THE GIRL

Scrape till it echoes out over the meadows!

OTHER GIRLS

(standing in a ring around a lad who is dancing)

That's a rare fling!

A GIRL

He has legs that can lift him!

THE LAD

(dancing)

The roof here is high,¹ and the walls wide asunder!

MADS MOEN, THE BRIDEGROOM

(comes whimpering up to his FATHER, who is standing talking with some other men, and twitches his jacket)

Father, she will not, she is so proud!

HIS FATHER

What won't she do?

THE BRIDEGROOM

She has locked herself in.

¹ To kick the rafters is considered a great feat in the Halling-dance. The boy means that, in the open air, his leaps are not limited even by the rafters

HIS FATHER

Well, you must manage to find the key

THE BRIDEGROOM

I don't know how

HIS FATHER

You're a nincompoop!

(*Turns away to the others. The BRIDEGROOM drifts across the yard*)

A LAD

(*comes from behind the house*)

Wait a bit, girls! Things 'll soon be lively!
Here comes Peer Gynt

ASLAK, THE SMITH

(*who has just come up*)

Who invited him?

THE MASTER-COOK

No one

(*Goes towards the house*)

ASLAK, THE SMITH

(*to the girls*)

If he should speak to you, never take notice!

A GIRL

(*to the others*)

No, we'll pretend that we don't even see him

PEER GYNT

(*comes in heated and full of animation, stops right in the midst of the group*)

Which is the liveliest girl of the lot of you?

A GIRL

(as he approaches her)

I am not

ANOTHER

(similarly)

I am not

A THIRD

No, nor I either

PEER

(to a fourth)

You come along, then, for want of a better

THE GIRL

Haven't got time

PEER.

(to a fifth)

Well then, you!

THE GIRL

(going)

I'm for home

PEER

To-night? are you utterly out of your senses?¹

ASLAK, THE SMITH

(after a moment, in a low voice)

See, Peer, she's taken a greyhound for partner.

¹ A marriage party among the peasants will often last several days

PEER

(turns sharply to an elderly man)

Where are the unbespoke girls?

THE MAN

Find them out

(Goes away from him)

(PEER GYNT has suddenly become subdued. He glances shyly and furtively at the group. All look at him, but no one speaks. He approaches other groups. Wherever he goes there is silence, when he moves away they look after him and smile.)

PEER

(to himself)

Mocking looks, needle-keen whispers and smiles
They grate like a sawblade under the file!

(SOLVEIG, leading little HELGA by the hand comes into the yard, along with her PARENTS)

A MAN

(to another, close to PEER GYNT)

Look, here are the new folk

THE OTHER

The ones from the west?

THE FIRST MAN.

Ay, the people from Hedal

THE OTHER

Ah, yes, so they are.

PEER

(*places himself in the path of the new-comers, points to SOLVEIG, and asks the FATHER*)

May I dance with your daughter?

THE FATHER

(*quietly*)

You may so, but first we must go to the farm-house and greet the good people
(*They go in*)

THE MASTER-COOK

(*to PEER GYNT, offering him drink*)

Since you *are* here, you'd best take a pull at the liquor.

PEER

(*looking fixedly after the new-comers*)

Thanks, I'm for dancing, I am not athirst.

(*The MASTER-COOK goes away from him PEER GYNT gazes towards the house and laughs*)

How fair! Did ever you see the like?

Looked down at her shoes and her snow-white apron—!

And then she held on to her mother's skirt-folds,
and carried a psalm-book wrapped up in a kerchief—!
I must look at that girl

(*Going towards the house*)

A LAD

(*coming out of the house, with several others*)

Are you off so soon, Peer,
from the dance?

PEER

No, no.

.

THE LAD

Then you're heading amiss!

(Takes hold of his shoulder to turn him round)

PEER

Let me pass!

THE LAD

I believe you're afraid of the Smith

PEER

I afraid!

THE LAD

You remember what happened at Lunde?

(They go off, laughing, to the dancing-green)

SOLVEIG

(in the doorway of the house)

Are you not the lad that was wanting to dance?

PEER

Of course it was me, don't you know me again?

(Takes her hand)

Come, then!

SOLVEIG.

We musn't go far, mother said

PEER.

Mother said! Mother said! Were you born yesterday?

SOLVEIG.

Now you're laughing——!

PEER

Are you grown up?
Why sure, you are almost a child

SOLVEIG

I read with the pastor last spring¹

PEER

Tell me your name, lass, and then we'll talk easier

SOLVEIG

My name is Solveig And what are you called?

PEER

Peer Gynt

SOLVEIG

(*withdrawing her hand*)

Oh, heaven!

PEER

Why, what it is now?

SOLVEIG

My garter is loose, I must tie it up tighter
(*Goess away from him*)

THE BRIDEGROOM

(*pulling at his MOTHER'S GOWN*)

Mother, she will not——!

HIS MOTHER

She will not? What?

¹ "To read with the pastor," the preliminary to confirmation, is currently used as synonymous with "to be confirmed"

THE BRIDEGROOM

She won't, mother——

HIS MOTHER

What?

THE BRIDEGROOM

Unlock the door

HIS FATHER

(angrily, below his breath)

Oh, you're only fit to be tied in a stall!

HIS MOTHER

Don't scold him Poor dear, he'll be all right yet

(They move away)

A LAD

(coming with a whole crowd of others from the dancing-green)

Peer, have some brandy?

PEER

No.

THE LAD

Only a dram?

PEER

(looking darkly at him)

Got any?

THE LAD

Well, I won't say but I have
(Pulls out a pocket-flask and drinks)
 Ah! How it stings your throat!—Well?

PEER

Let me try it
(Drinks)

ANOTHER LAD

Now you must try mine as well, you know

PEER

No!

THE LAD

Oh, nonsense, now don't be a fool
 Take a pull, Peer!

PEER

Well then, give me a drop
(Drinks again)

A GIRL

(half aloud)

Come, let's be going

PEER.

Afraid of me, wench?

A THIRD LAD

Who isn't afraid of *you*?

A FOURTH

At Lunde
 you showed us clearly what tricks you could play

PEER

I can do more than that, when once I get started!

THE FIRST LAD

(whispering)

Now he's getting into swing!

SEVERAL OTHERS

(forming a circle around him)

Tell away! Tell away!

What can you——?

PEER

To-morrow——!

OTHERS

No, now, to-night!

A GIRL

Can you conjure, Peer?

PEER

I can call up the devil!

A MAN

My grandam could do that before I was born!

PEER

Liar! What I can do, that no one else can
I one day conjured him into a nut
It was worm-bored, you see!

SEVERAL

(laughing)

Ay, that's easily guessed!

PEER

He cursed, and he wept, and he wanted to bribe me
with all sorts of things—

ONE OF THE CROWD

But he had to go in?

PEER

Of course I stopped up the hole with a peg
He! If you'd heard him rumbling and grumbling!

A GIRL

Only think!

PEER

It was just like a bumble-bee buzzing

THE GIRL

Have you got him still in the nut?

PEER

Why, no,
by this time that devil has flown on his way.
The grudge the Smith bears me is all *his* doing

A LAD

Indeed?

PEER

I went to the smithy, and begged
that he would crack that same nutshell for me
He promised he would!—laid it down on his anvil,
but Aslak, you know, is so heavy of hand,—
for ever swinging that great sledge-hammer—

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD

Did he kill the foul fiend?

PEER

He laid on like a man
But the devil showed fight, and tore oft in a flame
through the root, and shattered the wall asunder.

SEVERAL VOICES

And the Smith——?

PEER

Stood there with his hands all scorched
And from that day onwards, we've never been friends
(*General laughter*)

SOME OF THE CROWD

That yarn is a good one

OTHERS

About his best

PEER

Do you think I am making it up?

A MAN

Oh no,
that you're certainly not, for I've heard the most on't
from my grandfather——

PEER

Liar! It happened to me!

THE MAN

Yes, like everything else

PEER GYNT

PEER

(with a *fling*)

I can ride, I can,
 clean through the air, on the bravest of steeds!
 Oh, many's the thing I can do, I tell you!

(Another roar of laughter)

ONE OF THE GROUP

Peer, ride through the air a bit!

MANY

Do, dear Peer Gynt——!

PEER

You may spare you the trouble of begging so hard
 I will ride like a hurricane over you all!
 Every man in the parish shall fall at my feet!

AN ELDERLY MAN

Now he is clean off his head

ANOTHER

The dolt!

A THIRD

Braggart!

A FOURTH

Liar!

PEER

(threatening them)

Ay, wait till you see!

A MAN
(*half drunk*)

Av, wait, you'll soon get your jacket dusted!

OTHERS

Your back beaten tender! Your eyes painted blue!

(*The crowd disperses, the elder men angry, the younger laughing and jeering*)

THE BRIDEGROOM
(*close to PEER GYNT*)

Peer, is it true you can ride through the air?

PEER
(*shortly*)

It's all true, Mads! You must know I'm a rare one!

THE BRIDEGROOM

Then have you got the Invisible Cloak too?

PEER

The Invisible Hat, do you mean? Yes, I have

(*Turns away from him SOLVEIG crosses the yard*)

PEER.

(*goes towards her, his face lights up*)

Solveig! Oh, it is well you have come!

(*Takes hold of her wrist.*)

Now will I swing you round fast and fine!

SOLVEIG

Loose me!

PEER

Wherfore?

PEER GYNT

SOLVEIG

You are so wild

PEER

The reindeer is wild, too, when summer is dawning
 Come then, lass, do not be wayward now!

SOLVEIG

(withdrawing her arm)

Dare not

PEER

Wherfore?

SOLVEIG

No, you've been drinking

(Moves away)

PEER

Oh, if I had but my knife-blade driven
 clean through the heart of them,—one and all!

THE BRIDEGROOM

(nudging him with his elbow)

Peer, can't you help me to get at the bride?

PEER

(absently)

The bride? Where is she?

THE BRIDEGROOM

In the store-house

PEER.

Ah!

THE BRIDEGROOM

Oh, dear Peer Gynt, you must try at least!

PEER

No, you must get on without my help
(A thought strikes him, he says softly but sharply)
 Ingrid! The store-house!

(Goes up to SOLVEIG.)

Have you thought better on't?

(SOLVEIG tries to go, he blocks her path)
 You're ashamed to, because I've the look of a tramp

SOLVEIG

(hastily)

No, that you haven't, that's not true at all!

PEER

Yes! And I've taken a drop as well,
 but that was to spite you, because you had hurt me
 Come then!

SOLVEIG

Even if I would now, I daren't

PEER

Who are you frightened of?

SOLVEIG.

Father, most.

PEER.

Father? Ay, ay, he is one of the quiet ones!
 One of the godly, eh?—Answer, come!

SOLVEIG

What shall I say?

PEER

Is your father a psalm-singer?
 And you and your mother as well, no doubt?
 Come, will you speak?

SOLVEIG

Let me go in peace

PEER

No!

(In a low but sharp and threatening tone)

I can turn myself into a troll!
 I'll come to your bedside at midnight to-night
 If you should hear someone hissing and spitting,
 you mustn't imagine it's only the cat
 It's me, lass! I'll drain out your blood in a cup,
 and your little sister, I'll eat her up,
 ay, you must know I'm a were-wolf at night,—
 I'll bite you all over the loins and the back—

(Suddenly changes his tone, and entreats)

Dance with me, Solveig!

SOLVEIG

(looking darkly at him)

Then you were grim¹

(Goes into the house)

THE BRIDEGROOM

(comes sidling up again)

I'll give you an ox if you'll help me!

¹ Literally "Now you were ugly"

PEER

Then come!

(They rush out towards the store-house. At the same moment a crowd of men come up from the dancing green, most of them are drunk. Noise and hubbub. SOLVEIG, HELGA, and their PARENTS appear among a number of elderly people in the doorway.)

THE MASTER-COOK

(to the SMITH, who is the foremost of the crowd).

Keep peace now!

THE SMITH

(pulling off his jacket)

No, we must fight it out here
Peer Gynt or I must be taught a lesson

SOME VOICES

Ay, let them fight for it!

OTHERS

No, only wrangle!

THE SMITH

Fists must decide, for the case is past words

SOLVEIG'S FATHER.

Control yourself, man!

HELGA

Will they beat him, mother?

A LAD

Let us rather tease him with all his lies!

ANOTHER

Kick him out of the company!

A THIRD

Spit in his eyes!

A FOURTH

(to the SMITH)

You're not backing out, Smith?

THE SMITH

(flinging away his jacket)

The jade shall be slaughtered!

SOLVEIG'S MOTHER

(to SOLVEIG)

There, you can see how that windbag is thought of

ASE

(coming up with a stick in her hand).

Is that son of mine here? Now he's in for a drubbing!
Oh! how heartily I will dang him!

THE SMITH

(rolling up his shirt-sleeves).

That switch is too light for a carcass like his.

SOME OF THE CROWD.

The Smith will dang him!

OTHERS.

Bang him!

THE SMITH

(spits on his hand and nods to ASE).

Hang him!

ASE

What? Hang my peer? Ay, just try if you dare,—
 Ase and I,¹ we have teeth and claws!—
 Where is he? (*Calls across the yard*) Peer!

THE BRIDEGROOM

(*comes running up*)

Oh, God's death on the cross!
 Come father, come mother, and——!

HIS FATHER

What is the matter?

THE BRIDEGROOM

Just fancy, Peer Gynt——!

ASE

(*screams*)

Have they taken his life?

THE BRIDEGROOM

No, but Peer Gynt——! Look, there on the hillside——!

THE CROWD

With the bride!

ASE

(*lets her stick sink*)

Oh, the beast!

THE SMITH

(*as if thunderstruck*)

Where the slope rises sheerest
 he's clambering upwards, by God, like a goat!

¹ A peasant idiom

THE BRIDEGROOM

(crying).

He's shouldered her, mother, as I might a pig!

ASE

(shaking her fist up at him)

Would God you might fall, and——!

(Screams out in terror)

Take care of your footing!

THE HEGSTAD FARMER

(comes in, bare-headed and white with rage)

I'll have his life for this bride-rape yet!

ASE

Oh no, God punish me if I let you!

(END OF ACT FIRST)

ACT SECOND

SCENE FIRST

(*A narrow path, high up in the mountains Early morning*)

(*PEER GYNT comes hastily and suddenly along the path INGRID, still wearing some of her bridal ornaments, is trying to hold him back*)

PEER

Get you from me!

INGRID

(*weeping*)

After this, Peer?

Whither?

PEER

Where you will for me

INGRID

(*wringing her hands*)

Oh, what falsehood!

PEER.

Useless railing

Each alone must go his way.

Devil take all recollections!

Devil take the tribe of women—

all but one——!

INGRID.

Who is that one, pray?

PEER

'Tis not you

INGRID

Who is it then?

PEER

Go! Go thither whence you came!
Off! To your father!

INGRID

Dearest, sweetest——

PEER

Peace!

INGRID

You cannot mean it, surely,
what you're saying?

PEER.

Can and do.

INGRID

First to lure—and then forsake me!

PEER

And what terms have you to offer?

INGRID

Hegstad Farm, and more besides.

PEER

Is your psalm-book in your kerchief?
Where's the gold-mane on your shoulders?
Do you glance adown your apron?
Do you hold your mother's skirt-fold?
Speak!

INGRID

No, but—

PEER

Went you to the Pastor
this last spring-tide?

INGRID.

No, but Peer—

PEER.

Is there shyness in your glances?
When I beg, can you deny?

INGRID.

Heaven! I think his wits are going!

PEER.

Does your presence sanctify?
Speak!

INGRID

No, but—

PEER

What's all the rest then?
(*Going.*)

INGRID

(*blocking his way*)

Know you it will cost you your neck
should you fail me?

PEER

What do I care?

INGRID

You may win both wealth and honour
if you take me——

PEER

Can't afford

INGRID

(*bursting into tears*)

Oh, you lured me——!

PEER

You were willing

INGRID

I was desperate!

PEER

Frantic I

INGRID

(*threatening*)

Dearly shall you pay for this!

PEER.

Dearest payment cheap I'll reckon

INGRID

Is your purpose set?

PEER

Like flint

INGRID

Good! we'll see, then, who's the winner! (*Leaving*)

PEER

(*stands silent a moment, then cries*)
 Devil take all recollections!
 Devil take the tribe of women!

INGRID

(*turning her head, and calling back mockingly*)
 All but *one*!

PEER.

Yes, all but *one*
 (*They go their several ways*)

ASE

(*enters in great distress*)

All things are against me with wrathful might!
 Heaven, and the waters, and the grisly mountains!
 Fog-scuds from heaven roll down to bewilder him!
 The treacherous waters are lurking to murder him!
 The mountains would crush him with landslide and rift!—
 And the people too! They're out after his life!
 God knows they shan't have it! I can't bear to lose him!
 Oh, the oaf! to think that the fiend should tempt him!
 (*In a fresh access of terror*)
 Hu! What a scream! It's the nixie or droug¹¹

¹¹ A malevolent water-monster

Peer! Peer!—Up there on that hillock——!

(*She runs to the top of a little rise, and looks out over the tarn* SOLVEIG, her FATHER and MOTHER come up)

ASE

Not a sign to be seen

THE FATHER

(quietly).

It is worst for him!

ASE

(weeping)

Oh, my Peer! Oh, my own lost lamb!

THE FATHER

(nods mildly)

You may well say lost

ASE.

Oh no, don't talk like that!
He is so clever. There's no one like him

THE FATHER.

You foolish woman!

ASE.

Oy ay, oh ay,
foolish I am, but the boy's all right!

THE FATHER

(still softly and with mild eyes).

His heart is hardened, his soul is lost.

ASE
(*in terror*)

No, no, he can't be so hard, our Lord!

THE FATHER

Do you think he can sigh for his debt of sin?

ASE
(*eagerly*)

No, but he can ride through the air on a buck, though!

THE MOTHER

Lord, are you mad?

THE FATHER

Why, what do you mean?

ASE

Never a deed is too great for him
You shall see, if only he lives so long——

THE FATHER

Best if you saw him on the gallows hanging

ASE
(*shrieks*).

Oh, cross of Christ!

THE FATHER.

In the hangman's hands,
it may be his heart would be turned to repentance.

ASE
(*bewildered*)

Oh, you'll soon talk me out of my senses!
We must find him!

THE FATHER
To rescue his soul

ASE

If he's stuck in the swamp, we must drag him out,
if he's taken by trolls, we must ring the bells for him
And his body!

THE FATHER
Hm!—Here's a sheep-path——

ASE

The Lord will repay you
your guidance and help!

THE FATHER
It's a Christian's duty

ASE

Then the others, fie! they are heathens all,
there wasn't one that would go with us——

THE FATHER
They knew him too well

ASE

He was too good for them!
(*Wings her hands*)
And to think—and to think that his life is at stake!

THE FATHER
Here are tracks of a man

ASE

Then it's here we must search!

THE FATHER

We'll scatter a-round on this side of our saeter¹

(*He and his wife go on ahead*)

SOLVEIG

(to ASE)

Say on, tell me more

ASE

(drying her eyes)

Of my son, you mean?

SOLVEIG

Yes,—

Tell everything!

ASE

(smiles and tosses her head)

Everything?—Soon you'd be tired!

SOLVEIG

Sooner by far will you tire of the telling
than I of the hearing

(They leave)

PEER

(Returns)

The parish is all at my heels in a pack!
Every man of them armed or with gun or with club
Foremost I hear the old Hegstad-churl howling—
Now it's noised far and wide that Peer Gynt is abroad!
It is different, this, from a bout with a smith!

¹ *Saeter*—a chalet, or small mountain farm, where the cattle are sent to pasture in the summer months

This is life! Every limb grows as strong as a bear's
(Strikes out with his arms and leaps in the air)

To crush, overturn, stem the rush of the foss'
 To strike! Wrench the fir-tree right up by the root!
 This is life! This both hardens and lifts one high!
 To hell then with all of the sourless lies!

A shimmering like rainbow-streamers
 goes shooting through eyes and brain
 What is it, that far-off chiming?
 I hear it again and again
 What's weighing my eyebrows down?
 Hu, how my forehead's throbbing—
 a tightening red-hot ring—!
 I cannot think who the devil
 has bound it around my head!

(Sinks down)

Flight o'er the Edge of Gendin—
 stuff and accursed lies!
 Up o'er the steepest hill-wall
 with the bride,—and a whole day drunk,
 hunted by hawks and falcons,
 threatened by trolls and such,
 sporting with crazy wenches —
 lies and accursed stuff!

(Gazes long upwards)

Yonder sail two brown eagles.
 Southward the wild geese fly.

(Springs up)

I'll fly too! I will wash myself clean in
 the bath of the keenest winds!
 I'll fly high! I will plunge myself fair in
 the glorious christening-font!
 I will soar far over the sæter,
 I will ride myself pure of soul,
 I will forth o'er the salt sea waters,
 Ha-ha, yonder house, I know it,

it's grandfather's new-built farm!
The lights gleam from every casement,
there's a feast in the hall to-night

There, that was the provost clinking
the back of his knife on his glass,—
there's the captain flinging his bottle,
and shivering the mrror to bits—
Let them waste, let it all be squandered!
Peace, mother, what need we care!
'Tis the rich Jon Gynt gives the banquet,
hurrah for the race of Gynt!
What's all this bustle and hubbub?
Why do they shout and bawl?
oh, the provost woudl drink my health
Peer Gynt, thou art come of great things,
and great things shall come of thee!

(*Sinks in a stupor, which is indicated by darkness. In a misty light appears The Green Clad Woman, daughter of the King of the Trolls, mountain goblins*)

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Is it true?

PEER

(*drawing his finger across his throat*)

As true as my name is Peer,—
as true as that you are a lovely woman!
Will you have me? You'll see what a fine man I'll be,
you shall neither tread the loom nor turn the spindle.
You shall eat all you want, till you're ready to burst
I will never drag you about by the hair—

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Nor beat me?

PEER

No, can you think I would?
We kings' sons never beat women and such.

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

You're a king's son?

PEER

Yes

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

I'm the Dovre-King's daughter

PEER

Are you? See there now, how well that fits in!

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Deep in the Ronde has father his palace

PEER

My mother's is bigger, or much I'm mistaken

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Do you know my father? His name is King Brose

PEER

Do you know my mother? Her name is Queen Ase

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

When my father is angry the mountains are riven

PEER

They reel when my mother by chance falls a-scolding

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

My father can kick e'en the loftiest roof-tee¹

¹ Kicking the rafters is a much-admired exploit in peasant dancing

PEER

My mother can ride through the deepest river

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Have you other garments besides those rags?

PEER

Ho, you should just see my Sunday clothes!

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

My week-day gown is of gold and silk

PEER

It looks to me like tow and straw,

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Black it seems white, and ugly seems fair

PEER

Big it seems little, and dirty seems clean

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

(*Falling on his neck*)

Ay, Peer, now I see that we fit, you and I!

PEER

Like the leg and the trouser, the hair and the comb

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

(*calls away over the hillside*)

Bridal-steed! Bridal-steed! Come, bridal-steed mine!

(*A huge wild boar comes running in with a rope's end for a bridle and an old sack for a saddle. PEER GYNT vaults on its back, and the GREEN-CLAD ONE sits behind him*)

PEER

Hark-away! Through the Ronde-gate gallop we in!
Gee-up, gee-up, my courser fine!

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

(*tenderly*)

Ah, but lately I wandered and moped and pined—
One never can tell what may happen to one!

PEER

(*thrashing the boat and trotting off*)
You may know the great by their riding-gear!

(END OF SCENE FIRST)

SCENE SECOND

(The Royal Hall of the King of the Dovre-Trolls. A great assembly of TROLL-COURTIERS, GNOMES, and BROWNIES. THE OLD MAN OF THE DOVRE sits in the center, crowned, and with his sceptre in his hand PEER GYNT stands before him. Violent commotion in the hall.)

THE TROLL COURTIERS

Slay him! a Christian-man's son has deluded
the Dovre-King's loveliest maid!

A TROLL-IMP

May I hack him on the fingers?

ANOTHER

May I tug him by the hair?

A TROLL-MAIDEN

Hu, hei, let me bite him in the haunches!

A TROLL-WITCH

(with a ladle).

Shall he be boiled into broth and bree?

ANOTHER TROLL-WITCH

(with a chopper).

Shall he roast on a spit or be browned in a stewpan?

THE OLD MAN OF THE DOVRE

Ice to your blood, friends!

(*Beckons his counsellors nearer around him*)

Don't let us talk big

We've been drifting astern in these latter years,
we can't tell what's going to stand or to fall,
and there's no sense in turning recruits away
Besides the lad's body has scarce a blemish,
and he's strongly-built too, if I see aright
It's true, he has only a single head,
but my daughter, too, has no more than one
Three-headed trolls are going clean out of fashion,
one hardly sees even a two-header now,
and even those heads are but so-so ones

(*To PEER GYNT*)

It's my daughter, then, you demand of me?

PEER

Your daughter and the realm to her dowry, yes

THE OLD MAN

You shall have the half while I'm still alive,
and the other half when I come to die

PEER

I'm content with that

THE OLD MAN

Ay, but stop, my lad,—

you also have some undertakings to give

If you break even one, the whole pact's at an end,
and you'll never get away from here living.

First of all you must swear that you'll never give heed
to aught that lies outside the Ronde-hills' bounds,
day you must shun, and deeds, and each sunlit spot.

PEER

Only call me king, and that's easy to keep

THE OLD MAN

And next—now for putting your wits to the test
(Draws himself up in his seat)

THE OLDEST TROLL-COURTIER

(to PEER GYNT)

Let us see if you have a wisdom-tooth
 that can crack the Dove-King's riddle-nut!

THE OLD MAN

What difference is there 'twixt trolls and men?

PEER

No difference at all, as it seems to me
 Big trolls would roast you and small trolls would claw you,—
 with us it were likewise, if only they dared

THE OLD MAN

True enough, in that and in more we're alike
 Yet morning is morning and even is even,
 and there is a difference all the same—
 Now let me tell you wherein it lies.
 Out yonder, under the shining vault,
 among men the saying goes "Man, be thyself!"
 At home here with us, 'mid the tribe of the trolls,
 the saying goes "Troll, to thyself be—enough!"

THE TROLL-COURTIER

(to PEER GYNT)

Can you fathom the depth?

PEER.

It strikes me as misty

THE OLD MAN

And next you must learn to appreciate
our homely, everyday way of life.

(*He beckons, two TROLLS with pigs'-heads, white night-caps, and so forth, bring in food and drink*)

The cow gives cakes and the bullock mead,
ask not if its taste be sour or sweet,
the main matter is, and you musn't forget it,
it's all of it home-brewed

PEER

(*pushing the things away from him*)

The devil fly off with your home-brewed drinks!
I'll never get used to the ways of this land

THE OLD MAN.

The bowl's given in, and it's fashioned of gold
Whoso owns the gold bowl, him my daughter holds dear

PEER

(*pondering*)

It is written. Thou shalt bridle the natural man,—
and I daresay the drink may in time seem less sour
So be it!

(*Complies.*)

THE OLD MAN

Ay, that was sagaciously said.
You spit?

PEER

One must trust to the force of habit

THE OLD MAN.

And next you must throw off your Christian-man's garb,
for this you must know to our Dovre's renown:

here all things are mountain-made, nought's from the dale
except the silk bow at the end of your tail

PEER
(*indignant*).

I haven't a tail!

THE OLD MAN.

Then of course you must get one

PEER

I'll be hanged if I do! Would you make me a fool?
Make a beast of a man!

THE OLD MAN

Nay, my son, you mistake,
I make you a mannerly wooer, no more
A bright orange bow we'll allow you to wear,
and that passes here for the highest of honours

PEER
(*reflectively*)

It's true, as the saying goes Man's but a mote
And it's wisest to follow the fashion a bit
Tie away!

THE OLD MAN

You're a tractable fellow, I see.
We troll-folk, my son, are less black than we're painted,
that's another distinction between you and us—
But the serious part of the meeting is over;
now let us gladden our ears and our eyes
Music-maid, forth! Set the Dovre-harp sounding!
Dancing-maid, forth! Tread the Dovre-hall's floor!

(*Music and a dance*)

THE COURTIER

How like you it?

PEER

Like it? Hm——

THE OLD MAN

What see you? Speak without fear!

PEER

Why, something horribly gruesome
a bell-cow with her hoof on a gut-harp strumming,
a sow in socklets a-trip to the tune

THE COURTIERS

Eat him!

THE OLD MAN

His sense is but human, remember!

TROLL-MAIDENS

Hu, tear away both his ears and his eyes!

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

(weeping)

Hu-hu! And this we must hear and put up with,
when I and my sister make music and dance

PEER

Oho, was it you? Well, a joke at the feast,
you must know, is never unkindly meant

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

Can you swear it was so?

PEER

Both the dance and the music
were utterly charming, the cat claw me else

THE OLD MAN

This same human nature's a singular thing,
it sticks to people so strangely long

PEER

What will you do?

THE OLD MAN

In your left eye, first,
I'll scratch you a bit, till you see awry,
but all that you see will seem fine and brave.
And then I'll just cut your right window-pane out——

PEER

Are you drunk?

THE OLD MAN

Just think how much worry and mortification
you'll thus escape from, year out, year in
You must remember, your eyes are the fountain
of the bitter and searing lye of tears

PEER

That's true; and it says in our sermon-book,
If thine eye offend thee, then pluck it out
But tell me, when will my sight heal up
into human sight?

THE OLD MAN

Nevermore, my friend

PEER

Indeed! In that case, I'll take my leave

THE OLD MAN

What would you outside?

PEER

I would go my way

THE OLD MAN

No, stop! It's easy to slip in here,
but the Dovre-King's gate doesn't open outwards

PEER

You wouldn't detain me by force, I hope?

THE OLD MAN

Come now, just listen to reason, Prince Peer!
And you'd fain be a troll?

PEER

Yes, I would, sure enough
For a bride and a well-managed kingdom to boot,
I can put up with losing a good many things
But there is a limit to all things on earth
To live as a hill-troll for all one's days—
to feel that one never can beat a retreat,—
as the book has it, *that's* what your heart is set on,
but that is a thing I can never agree to

THE OLD MAN

Now, sure as I live, I shall soon lose my temper,
and then I am not to be trifled with
You pasty-faced loon! Do you know who I am?
First with my daughter you make too free——

PEER.

There you lie in your throat!

THE OLD MAN

You must marry her

PEER.

Do you dare to accuse me——?

THE OLD MAN

What? Can you deny
that you lusted for her in heart and eye?

PEER

(with a *sort of contempt*)

No more? Who the deuce cares a straw for that?

THE OLD MAN

It's ever the same with this humankind
The spirit you're ready to own with your lips,
but in fact nothing counts that your fists cannot handle
So you really think, then, that lust matters nought?
Wait, you shall soon have ocular proof of it——

PEER

You don't catch me with a bait of lies!

THE GREEN-CLAD ONE

My Peer, ere the year's out, you'll be a father

PEER

Open doors! let me go!

THE OLD MAN

In a he-goat's skin,
you shall have the brat after you

PEER GYNT

PEER

(mopping the sweat off his brow)

Would I could waken!

THE OLD MAN

Shall we send him to the palace?

PEER

You can send him to the parish!

THE OLD MAN

(looks at him for a while in high disdain, then says)

Dash him to shards on the rock-walls, children!

THE TROLL-IMPS

Oh dad, mayn't we play owl-and-eagle first!
The wolf-game! Grey-mouse and glow-eyed cat!

THE OLD MAN

Yes, but quick I am worried and sleepy Good-night!
(He goes)

PEER

(hunted by the TROLL-IMPS)

Let me be, devil's imps!

(Tries to escape up the chimney)

THE IMPS

Come brownies! Come nixies!
Bite him behind!

PEER.

Ow!

(Tries to slip down the cellar trap-door)

THE IMPS

Shut up all the crannies!

THE TROLL-COURTIER

Now the small-fry are happy!

PEER

(struggling with a little IMP that has bit himself fast to his ear)

Let go will you, beast!

THE COURTIER

(hitting him across the fingers)

Gently, you scamp, with a scion of royalty!

PEER.

A rat-hole——!

(Runs to it)

THE IMPS

Be quick, Brother Nixie, and block it!

PEER.

The old one was bad, but the youngsters are worse!

THE IMPS.

Slash him!

PEER

Oh, would I were small as a mouse!

(Rushing around)

THE IMPS

(swarming round him)

Close the ring! Close the ring!

PEER
(weeping).

Would that I were a louse!
(*He falls*)

THE IMPS

Now into his eyes!

PEER
(*buried in a heap of IMPS*)
Mother, help me, I die!
(*Church-bells sound far away and the hubbub is instantly hushed.*)

THE IMPS

Bells in the mountain! The Black-Frock's cows!

(*THE TROLLS take to flight, amid a confused uproar of yells and shrieks. The palace collapses, everything disappears in utter darkness.*)

(*PEER GYNT is heard beating and slashing about him with a large bough.*)

PEER.

Answer! Who are you?

A VOICE IN THE DARKNESS

Myself

PEER.

Clear the way!

THE VOICE.

Go roundabout, Peer! The hill's roomy enough.

PEER

(tries to force a passage at another place, but strikes against something).

Who are *yo*u?

THE VOICE

Myself. Can you say the same?

PEER

I can say what I will, and my sword can smite!
Mind yourself! Hu, hei, now the blow falls crushing!
King Saul slew hundreds, Peer Gynt slew thousands!

(Cutting and slashing)

Who are you?

THE VOICE

Myself

PEER

That stupid reply
you may spare, it doesn't clear up the matter
What are you?

THE VOICE

The great Boyg¹

PEER.

Ah, indeed!
The riddle was black; now I'd call it grey
Clear the way then, Boyg!

¹There are no doubt many possible sub-intentions in the Boyg, and we may, if we please, understand it as the Spirit of compromise amongst other things. It is a vague, shapeless, ubiquitous, inevitable, invulnerable and invisible thing

THE VOICE.

Go roundabout, Peer!

PEER

No, through!

(Cuts and slashes)

There he fell!

(Tries to advance, but strikes against something)
Ho ho, are there more here?

THE VOICE

The Boyg, Peer Gynt! the one only one
It's the Boyg that's unwounded, and the Boyg that was hurt,
it's the Boyg that is dead, and the Boyg that's alive

PEER

(throws away the branch)

The weapon is troll-smeared,¹ but I have my fists!
(Fights his way forward)

THE VOICE

Ay, trust to your fists, lad, trust to your body
Hee-hee, Peer Gynt, so you'll reach the summit

PEER

(falling back again)

Forward or back, and it's just as far,—
out or in, and it's just as strait!
He is *there!* And *there!* And he's round the bend!
No sooner I'm out than I'm back in the ring—
Name who you are! Let me see you! What are you?

THE VOICE

The Boyg

¹ Rendered harmless by magical anointing

PEER

(groping around)

Not dead, not living, all slimy, misty
 Not so much as a shape! It's as bad as to battle
 in a cluster of snarling, half-wakened bears!
 (Screams)
 Strike back at me, can't you!

THE VOICE

The Boyg isn't mad.

PEER.

Strike!

THE VOICE

The Boyg strikes not

PEER.

Fight! You shall!

THE VOICE

The great Boyg conquers, but does not fight.

PEER.

Were there only a nixie here that could prick me!
 Were there only as much as a year-old troll!
 Only something to fight with But here there is nothing —
 Now he's snoring! Boyg!

THE VOICE

What's your will?

PEER.

Use strength!

THE VOICE

The great Boyg conquers in all things without it

PEER.

(biting his own arms and hands)

Claws and ravening teeth in my flesh!

I must feel the drip of my own warm blood

(A sound is heard like the wing-strokes of great birds)

BIRD-CRIES

Comes he now Boyg?

THE VOICE

Ay, step by step

BIRD-CRIES

All our sisters far off! Gather here to the tryst!

PEER.

If you'd save me now, lass, you must do it quick!

Gaze not adown so, lowly and bending —

Your clasp-book! Hurl it straight into his eyes!

BIRD-CRIES.

He totters!

THE VOICE

We have him.

BIRD-CRIES.

Sisters! Make haste!

PEER.

Too dear the purchase one pays for life
in such a heart-wasting hour of strife.

(Sinks down)

BIRD-CRIES

Boyg, there he's fallen! Seize him! Seize him!

(*A sound of bells and of psalm-singing is heard far away*)

THE BOYG

(*Shrinks up to nothing, and says in a gasp*)

He was too strong There were women behind him

(END OF SCENE SECOND)

SCENE THIRD

(*Same as Scene I, Act II, PEER GYNT is lying asleep as end of Scene I*)

PEER

(*wakens, and looks about him with dull and heavy eyes*
He spits)

What wouldn't I give for a pickled herring!

(*Spits again, and at the same moment catches sight of HELGA, who appears carrying a basket of food*)

Ha, child, are you there? What is it you want?

HELGA

It is Solveig——

PEER

(*jumping up*)

Where is she?

HELGA.

Behind the sæter

SOLVEIG

(*unseen*)

If you come nearer, I'll run away!

PEER

(*stopping short*).

Perhaps you're afraid I might take you in my arms?

SOLVEIG

For shame!

PEER

Do you know where I was last night?—
 Like a horse-fly the Dovre-King's daughter is after me

SOLVEIG

Then it was well that the bells were set ringing

PEER.

Peer Gynt's not the lad they can lure astray—
 What do you say?

HELGA

(crying)

Oh, she's running away!

(Running after her)

Wait!

PEER

(catches her by the arm)

Look here, what I have in my pocket!
 A silver button, child! You shall have it,—
 only speak for me!

HELGA

Let me be, let me go!

PEER.

There you have it

HELGA

Let go, there's the basket of food

PEER.

God pity you if you don't—!

HELGA

Uf, how you scare me!

PEER

(gently, letting her go)

No, I only meant beg her not to forget me!

(HELGA runs off)

(END OF ACT SECOND)

ACT THIRD.

SCENE FIRST

(In front of a settler's newly-built hut in the forest. A reindeer's horns over the door. The snow is lying deep around. It is dusk.)

(PEER GYNT is standing outside the door, fastening a large wooden bar to it)

PEER

(laughing between whiles)

Bars I must fix me, bars that can fasten
the door against troll-folk, and men, and women.
Bars I must fix me, bars that can shut out
all the cantankerous little hobgoblins.—

They come with the darkness, they knock and they rattle
Open, Peer Gynt, we're as nimble as thoughts are!

'Neath the bedstead we bustle, we rake in the ashes,
down the chumney we hustle like fiery-eyed dragons

Hee-hee! Peer Gynt, think you staples and planks
can shut out cantankerous hobgoblin-thoughts?

You're an outlaw, lad! You are banned to the woods
(Hews for a while rapidly)

Ay, an outlaw, ay You're no mother now
to spread your table and bring your food.

If you'd eat, my lad, you must help yourself,
fetch your rations raw from the wood and stream,
split your own fir roots¹ and light your own fire,
bustle around, and arrange and prepare things.

Would you clothe yourself warmly, you must stalk your deer,
would you found you a house, you must quarry the stones,

would you build up its walls, you must fell the logs,
and shoulder them all to the building-place—

(SOLVEIG comes, *she has a shawl over her head, and a bundle in her hand*)

SOLVEIG

God prosper your labour You must not reject me
You sent for me hither, and so you must take me

PEER.

Solveig! It cannot be—! Ay, but it is!—
And you're not afraid to come near to me!

SOLVEIG

One message you sent me by little Helga,
others came after in storm and in stillness
All that your mother told bore me a message,
that brought forth others when dreams sank upon me
Nights full of heaviness, blank, empty days,
brought me the message that now I must come
It seemed as though life had been quenched down there,
I could not laugh nor weep from the depths of my heart
I knew not for sure how you might be minded,
I knew but for sure what I should do and must do

PEER

But your father?

SOLVEIG

In all of God's wide earth
I have none I can call either father or mother.
I have loosed me from all of them.

PEER.

Solveig, you fair one—
and to come to me?

SOLVEIG

Ay, to you alone,
you must be all to me, friend and consoler
(*In tears*)

The worst was leaving my little sister,—
but parting from father was worse, still worse,
and worst to leave her at whose breast I was borne,—
oh no, God forgive me, the worst I must call
the sorrow of leaving them all, ay, all!

PEER

And you know the doom that was passed in spring?
It forfeits my farm and my heritage

SOLVEIG

Think you for heritage, goods, and gear,
I forsook the paths all my dear ones tread?

PEER

And know you the compact? Outside the forest
whoever may meet me may seize me at will

SOLVEIG.

I ran upon snow-shoes, I asked my way on,
they said "Whither go you?" I answered, "I go home"

PEER

Away, away then with nails and planks!
No need now for bars against hobgoblin-thoughts
If you dare dwell with the hunter here,
I know the hut will be blessed from ill.
Solveig! Let me look at you! Not too near!
Only look at you! Oh, but you are bright and pure!
Let me lift you! Oh, but you are fine and light!
Let me carry you, Solveig, and I'll never be tired!

I will not soil you With outstretched arms
 I will hold you far out from me, lovely and warm one!
 Oh, who would have thought I could draw you to me,—
 ah, but I have longed for you, daylong and nightlong
 Here you may see I've been hewing and building,—
 it must down again, dear, it is ugly and mean—

SOLVEIG

Be it mean or brave,—here is all to my mind
 One so lightly draws breath in the teeth of the wind
 Down below it was airless, one felt as though choked,
 that was partly what drove me in fear from the dale
 But here, with the fir-branches soighing o'erhead,—
 what a stillness and song!—I am here in my home

PEER.

And know you that surely? For all your days?

SOLVEIG.

The path I have trodden leads back nevermore

PEER

You are mine then! In! In the room let me see you!
 Go in! I must go to fetch fir-roots for fuel
 Warm shall the fire be and bright shall it shine,
 you shall sit softly and never be-a-cold

*(He opens the door, SOLVEIG goes in He stands
 still for a while, then laughs aloud with joy)*

PEER

My king's daughter! Now I have found her and won her!
 Her! Now the palace shall rise, deeply founded!

*(He seizes his axe and moves away, at the same
 moment THE GREEN CLAD WOMAN, in a tat-
 tered gown, comes out from the wood, an
 UGLY BRAT, with an ale-flagon in his hand,
 limps after, holding on to her skirt)*

THE WOMAN

Good evening, Peer Lightfoot!

PEER.

What is it? Who's there?

THE WOMAN

Old friends of yours, Peer Gynt! My home is near by
We are neighbors

PEER.

That is more than I know

THE WOMAN

Even as your hut was builded, mine built itself too

PEER

(going)

I'm in haste—

THE WOMAN

Yes, that you are always, my lad,
but I'll trudge behind you and catch you at last.

PEER

You're mistaken, good woman!

THE WOMAN

I was so before;
I was when you promised such mighty fine things.

PEER

I promised—? What devil's own nonsense is this?

THE WOMAN

You've forgotten the night when you drank with my sire?
You've forgot—?

PEER.

I've forgot what I never have known,
 What's this that you piate of? When last did we meet?

THE WOMAN

When last we met was when first we met

(*To THE BRAT*)

Give your father a drink, he is thirsty, I'm sure

PEER.

Father? You're drunk, woman! Do you call that——?

THE WOMAN

I should think you might well know the pig by its skin!
 Why, where are your eyes? Can't you see that he's lame
 in his shank, just as you too are lame in your soul?

PEER

Would you have me believe——?

THE WOMAN

Would you wriggle away——?

PEER.

This long-legged urchin——!

THE WOMAN

He's shot up apace

PEER.

Dare you, you troll-snout, father on me——?

THE WOMAN.

Come now, Peer Gynt, you're as rude as an ox!

(Weeping)

Is it my fault if no longer I'm fair,
 as I was when you lured me on hillside and lea?
 Last fall, in my labour, the Fiend held my back,
 and so 'twas no wonder I came out a fright
 But if you would see me as fair as before,
 you have only to turn yonder girl out of doors,
 drive her clean out of your sight and your mind,—
 do but this, dear my love, and I'll soon lose my snout!

PEER

Begone from me, troll-witch!

THE WOMAN

Ay, see if I do!

PEER

I'll split your skull open——!

THE WOMAN.

Just try if you dare!

Ho-ho, Peer Gynt, I've no fear of blows!
 Be sure I'll return every day of the year
 I'll set the door ajar and peep in at you both
 When you're sitting with your girl on the fireside bench,—
 when you're tender, Peer Gynt,—when you'd pet and caress
 her,—.
 I'll seat myself by you, and ask for my share
 She there and I—we will take you by turns.
 Farewell, dear my lad, you can marry to-morrow!

PEER.

You nightmare of hell!

THE WOMAN.

By-the-by, I forgot!

You must rear your own youngster, you light-footed scamp!
Little imp, will you go to your father?

THE BRAT
(*spits at him*)

I'll chop you with my hatchet, only wait, only wait!
Faugh!

THE WOMAN
(*kisses THE BRAT*)

What a head he has got on his shoulders, the dear!
You'll be father's living image when once you're a man!

PEER
(*stamping*)

Oh, would you were as far—!

THE WOMAN
As we now are near?

PEER
(*clenching his hands*)
And all this—!

THE WOMAN
For nothing but thoughts and desires!
It is hard on you, Peer!

PEER
It is worst for another!—
Solveig, my fairest, my purest gold!

THE WOMAN
Oh ay, 'tis the guiltless must smart, said the devil,

his mother boxed his ears when his father was drunk!

(*She trudges off into the thicket with THE BRAT, who throws the flagon at PEER GYNT.*)

PEER

(*after a long silence*)

The Boyg said, "Go roundabout!"—so one must here.—
There fell my fine palace, with crash and clatter!
There's a wall around her whom I stood so near,
of a sudden all's ugly—my joy has grown old—
Roundabout, lad! There's no way
right through all this from where you stand to her
Right through? Hm, surely there should be one.
There's a text on repentance, unless I mistake
But what? What is it? I haven't the book,
I've forgotten it mostly, and here there is none
that can guide me aright in the pathless wood.—

(*Goes a few steps towards the hut, but stops again*)

Go in after this? So befouled and disgraced?
Go in with that troll-rabble after me still?
Speak, yet be silent; confess, yet conceal—?

(*Throws away his axe*)

It's a holy-day evening For me to keep tryst,
such as now I am, would be sacrilege

SOLVEIG

(*Coming into the doorway*).

Are you coming?

PEER

(*half aloud*)

Roundabout!

SOLVEIG

What?

PEER

You must wait
It is dark, and I've got something heavy to fetch

SOLVEIG

Wait, I will help you, the burden we'll share

PEER

No, stay where you are! I must bear it alone

SOLVEIG

But don't go too far, dear!

PEER

Be patient, my girl,
be my way long or short—you must wait

SOLVEIG

(nodding to him as he goes)

Yes, I'll wait!

(PEER GYNT goes down the wood-path SOLVEIG
remains standing in the open half-door)

(END OF SCENE FIRST)

SCENE SECOND.

(ASE GYNT'S room Evening The room is lighted by a wood fire on the open hearth A cat is lying on a chair at the foot of the bed)
 (ASE lies in the bed, fumbling about restlessly with her hands on the coverlet)

ASE

Oh, Lord my God, isn't he coming?
 The time drags so dearly on
 I have no one to send with message,
 and I've much, oh so much, to say
 I haven't a moment to lose now!
 So quickly! Who could have foreseen!
 Oh me, if I only were certain
 I'd not been too strict with him!

PEER GYNT

(enters)

Good evening!

ASE

The Lord give you gladness!
 You've come then, my boy, my dear!
 But how dare you show face in the valley?
 You know your life's forfeit here

PEER.

Oh, life must e'en go as it may go,
 I felt that I must look in

ASE.

Ay, now Kari is put to silence,
 and I can depart in peace!

PEER

Depart? Why, what are you saying?
Where is it you think to go?

ASE

Alas, Peer, the end is nearing,
I have but a short time left

PEER

(*writhing, and walking towards the back of the room*)
See there now! I'm fleeing from trouble,
I thought at least here I'd be free——!
Are your hands and your feet a-cold, then?

ASE

Ay, Peer, all will soon be o'er—
When you see that my eyes are glazing,
you must close them carefully
And then you must see to my coffin,
and be sure it's a fine one, dear
Ah no, by-the-bye—

PEER

Be quiet!

There's time yet to think of that

ASE

Ay, ay.

(*Looks restlessly around the room*)
Here you see the little
they've left us! It's like them, just

PEER

(*with a writhe*).

Again!

(*Harshly*)

Well, I know it was my fault
What's the use of reminding me?

ASE

You! No, that accursed liquor,
from that all the mischief came!
Dear my boy, you know you'd been drinking,
and then no one knows what he does,
and besides, you'd been riding the reindeer,
no wonder your head was turned!

PEER.

Ay, ay, of that yarn enough now
Enough of the whole affair
All that's heavy we'll let stand over
till after—some other day
(*Sits on the edge of the bed*)
Now, mother, we'll chat together,
but only of this and that,—
forget what's awry and crooked,
and all that is sharp and sore—
Why see now, the same old pussy,
so she is alive then, still?

ASE.

She makes such a noise o' nights now;
you know what that bodes, my boy!

PEER

(*changing the subject*)

What news is there here in the parish?

ASE

(*smiling*).

There's somewhere about, they say,
a girl who would fain to the uplands——

PEER
(*hastily*)

Mads Moen, is he content?

ASE.

They say that she hears and heeds not
the old people's prayers and tears

PEER

The smith, what's become of him now?

ASE

Don't talk of that wretched smith
Her name I would rather tell you,
the name of the girl, you know——

PEER

No, now we will chat together,
but only of this and that,—
forget what's awry and crooked,
and all that is sharp and sore
Are you thirsty? I'll fetch you water
Can you stretch you? The bed is short.
Let me see,—if I don't believe, now,
It's the bed that I had when a boy!
Do you mind, dear, how oft in the evenings
you sat at my bedside here,
and spread the fur-coverlet o'er me,
and sang many a lilt and lay?

ASE.

Ay, mind you? And then we played sledges
when your father was far abroad
The coverlet served for sledge-apron,
and the floor for an ice-bound fiord.

PEER.

Ah, but the best of all, though,—
 mother, you mind that too?
 The best was the fleet-foot horses——

ASE

Ay, think you that I've forgot?—
 It was Kari's cat that we borrowed,
 it sat on the log-scooped chair——

PEER.

To the castle west of the moon, and
 the castle east of the sun,
 to Soria-Moria Castle
 the road ran both high and low
 A stick that we found in the closet,
 for a whip-shaft you made it serve

ASE

Right proudly I perked on the box-seat——

PEER.

Ay, ay, you threw loose the reins,
 and kept turning round as we travelled,
 and asked me if I was cold.
 God bless you, ugly old mother,—
 you were ever a kindly soul——!
 What's hurting you now?

ASE.

My back aches,
 because of the hard, bare boards

PEER.

Stretch yourself; I'll support you.
 There now, you're lying soft.

ASE

(uneasily)

No, Peer, I'd be moving!

PEER.

Moving?

ASE

Ay, moving, 'tis ever my wish

PEER

Oh, nonsense! Spread o'er you the bed-fur
 Let me sit at your bedside here
 There, now we'll shorten the evening
 with many a lilt and lay

ASE

Best bring from the closet the prayer-book
 I feel so uneasy of soul

PEER

In Soria-Moria Castle
 the King and the Prince give a feast
 On the sledge-cushions lie and rest you,
 I'll drive you there over the heath—

ASE

But, Peer dear, am I invited?

PEER

Ay, that we are, both of us.

(*He throws a string round the back of a chair takes up a stick, and seats himself at the foot of the bed.*)

Gee-up! Will you stir yourself, Black-boy?
 Mother, you're not a-cold?
 Ay, ay; by the pace one knows it,
 when Grane¹ begins to go!

ASE

Why, Peer, what is it that's ringing——?

PEER

The glittering sledge-bells, dear!

ASE

Oh, mercy, how hollow it's rumbling!

PEER.

We're just driving over a fiord.

ASE

I'm afraid! What is that I hear rushing
 and sighing so strange and wild?

PEER

It's the sough of the pine-trees, mother,
 on the heath Do you but sit still

ASE

There's a sparkling and gleaming afar now,
 whence comes all that blaze of light?

PEER

From the castle's windows and doorways.
 Don't you hear, they are dancing?

¹ Grane (Grani) was the name of Sigurd Fafnirsbane's horse, descended from Odin's Sleipnir. Sigurd's Grane was grey, Peer Gynt calls his "Svartens," Black-boy, or Blackey—See the "Volsunga Saga," translated by Morris and Magnussen Camelot edition, p 43

ASE.

Yes.

PEER

Outside the door stands Saint Peter,
and prays you to enter in

ASE.

Does he greet us?

PEER

He does, with honour,
and pours out the sweetest wine

ASE

Wine! Has he cakes as well, Peer?

PEER

Cakes? Ay, a heaped-up dish
And the dean's wife¹ is getting ready
your coffee and your dessert

ASE

Oh, Christ, shall we two come together?

PEER

As freely as ever you will.

ASE

Oh, deary, Peer, what a frolic
you're driving me to, poor soul!

PEER

(*cracking his whip*)

Gee-up, will you stir yourself, Black-boy!

¹ "Salig provstinde," literally "the late Mrs Provost"

ASE.

Peer, dear, you're driving right?

PEER

(cracking his whip again)

Ay, broad is the way.

ASE.

This journey,
it makes me so weak and tired

PEER

There's the castle rising before us,
the drive will be over soon

ASE.

I will lie back and close my eyes then,
and trust me to you, my boy!

PEER

Come up with you, Grane, my trotter!

In the castle the throng is great,
they bustle and swarm to the gatewayPeer Gynt and his mother are here!
What say you, Master Saint Peter?

Shall mother not enter in?

You may search a long time, I tell you,
ere you find such an honest old soul

Myself I don't want to speak of,

I can turn at the castle gate

If you'll treat me, I'll take it kindly;

If not, I'll go off just as pleased.

But her you shall honour and reverence,
and make her at home always,there comes not a soul to beat her
from the parishes nowadays —

(Uneasily.)

Why, what makes your eyes so glassy?

Mother! Have you gone out of your wits——?

(Goes to the head of the bed)

You musn't lie there and stare so——!

Speak, mother, it's I, your boy!

(Feels her forehead and hands cautiously, then throws the string on the chair, and says softly)

Ay, ay!—You can rest yourself, Grane,

for even now the journey's done

(Closes her eyes, and bends over her.)

For all of your days I thank you,

for beatings and lullabys!—

But see, you must thank me back, now—

(Presses his cheek against her mouth)

There, that was the driver's fare¹

KARI, THE COTTAR'S WIFE

(entering)

What? Peer! Ah, then we are over
the worst of the sorrow and need!

Dear Lord, but she's sleeping soundly—
or can she be?

PEER

Hush, she is dead.

(KARI weeps beside the body)

PEER

See mother buried with honour
I must try to fare forth from here

KARI.

Are you faring afar?

¹ *Tak for skyds*, literally “thanks for the drive”

PEER

To seaward

KARI

So far!

PEER

Ay, and further still
(*He goes*)

(END OF ACT THIRD).

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE FIRST

(On the coast of Morocco. A palm-grove. Under an awning, on ground covered with matting, a table spread for dinner. Further back in the grove hammocks are slung. In the offing lies a steam-yacht, flying the Norwegian and American colours. A jolly-boat drawn upon the beach. It is towards sunset.)

(PEER GYNT, a handsome middle-aged gentleman, in an elegant traveling-dress, with a gold-rimmed double eye-glass hanging at his waistcoat, is doing the honours at the head of the table. MR COTTON, MONSIEUR BALLON, HERR VON EBERKOPF, and HERR TRUMPETERSTRALE,¹ are seated at the table finishing dinner.)

PEER GYNT

Drink, gentlemen! If man is made for pleasure, let him take his fill then
What can I offer you?

TRUMPETERSTRALE

As host you're princely, Brother Gynt!

PEER.

I share the honour with my cash,
with cook and steward—

¹ A Swede. The name means "trumpet-blast."

MR COTTON

Very well,¹
let's pledge a toast to all the four¹

MONSIEUR BALLOON.

Monsieur,² you have a *gout*,² a *ton*,²
that nowadays is seldom met with
among men living *en garçon*,²
a certain—what's the word——?

VON EBERKOPF

A dash,
a tinge of free soul-contemplation,
and cosmopolitanisation,³
an outlook through the cloudy rifts
by narrow prejudice unhemmed,
a stamp of high illumination,
an *Ur-Natur*,² with lore of life,
to crown the trilogy, united
Nicht wahr, Mein Herr, 'twas that you meant?

MONSIEUR BALLOON

Yes, very possibly, not quite
so loftily it sounds in French.

VON EBERKOPF

*Ei was!*⁴ That language is so stiff—
But the phenomenon's final cause
if we would seek——

¹ In the original (early editions), "Werry well"

² So in original

³ This may not be a very lucid or even very precise rendering of *Verdensborgerdomsforpagtnung*; but this line, and indeed the whole speech, is pure burlesque, and the exact sense of non-sense is naturally elusive

⁴ So in original

PEER.

It's found already
 The reason is that I'm unmarried
 Yes, gentlemen, completely clear
 the matter is What should a man be?
Himself, is my concise reply
 He should think only of *himself* and *his*
 But can he, as a sumpter-mule¹
 for others' woe and others' weal?

VON EBERKOPF

But this same in-and-for-yourself-ness,
 I'll answer for't, has cost you strife—

PEER

(lights a cigar)

Dear friends,
 just think of my career in general
 In what case came I to the West?
 A poor young fellow, empty-handed
 I had to battle sore for bread,
 trust me, I often found it hard
 Well! Luck, you see, was kind to me,
 I prospered, and, by versatility,
 I prospered better still and better
 In ten years' time I bore the name
 of Croesus 'mongst the Charleston shippers
 My fame flew wide from port to port,
 and fortune sailed on board my vessels—

MR. COTTON

What did you trade in?

¹ Literally, "pack-camel"

PEER.

I did most
in negro slaves for Carolina,
and idol-images for China

MONSIEUR BALLON

*Et donc*¹

TRUMPETERSTRALE

The devil, Uncle Gynt!

PEER.

You think, no doubt, the business hovered
on the outer verge of the allowable?
Myself I felt the same thing keenly
It struck me even as odious.
But, trust me, when you've once begun,
it's hard to break away again
At any rate it's no light thing,
in such a vast trade-enterprise,
that keeps whole thousands in employ,
to break off wholly, once for all.
Besides, I had begun to age,
was getting on towards the fifties,—
my hair was slowly growing grizzled,
and, though my health was excellent,
yet painfully the thought beset me:
Who knows how soon the hour may strike,
that parts the sheep and goats asunder?

What could I do? To stop the trade
With China was impossible.
A plan I hit on—opened straightway
a new trade with the self-same land.
I shipped off idols every spring,
each autumn sent forth missionaries,
supplying them with all they needed,
as stockings, Bibles, rum and rice—

¹ So in original.

MR COTTON

Yes, at a profit?

PEER.

Why, of course
 It prospered. Dauntlessly they toiled
 For every idol that was sold
 they got a native well baptised,
 so that the effect was neutralised

MR COTTON

Well, but the African commodities?

PEER

There, too, my ethics won the day.
 I saw the traffic was a wrong one
 for people of a certain age
 So in the South I bought some land,
 and kept the last flesh-importation,
 which chanced to be a superfine one.
 They thrrove so, grew so fat and sleek,
 that 'twas a joy to me, and them too
 Yes, without boasting, I may say
 I acted as a father to them,—
 I built them schools, too, so that virtue
 might uniformly be maintained at
 a certain general high level
 Now, furthermore, from all this business
 I've beat a definite retreat,—
 I've sold the whole plantation, and
 its tale of live-stock, hide and hair
 At parting, too, I served around,
 to big and little, gratis grog,¹
 so men and women all got drunk,

¹ So in original

and widows got their snuff as well
 So that is why I trust,
 my former errors are forgotten,
 and I, much more than most, can hold
 my misdeeds balanced by my virtues

VON EBERKOPF

(clinking glasses with him)

How strengthening it is to hear
 a principle thus acted out,
 freed from the night of theory,
 unshaken by the outward ferment!

PEER

(who has been drinking freely during the preceding
passages).

We Northland men know how to carry
 our battle through!

MONSIEUR BALLON

You are Norwegian?

PEER.

Yes, by birth,
 but cosmopolitan in spirit.
 For fortune such as I've enjoyed
 I have to thank America.
 My amply-furnished library
 I owe to Germany's later schools
 From France, again, I get my waistcoats,
 my manners, and my spice of wit,—
 from England an industrious hand,
 and keen sense for my own advantage.
 The Jew has taught me how to wait
 Some *tisst* for *dolce far niente*¹

¹ So in original

I have received from Italy,—
and one time, in a perilous pass,
to eke the measure of my days,
I had recourse to Swedish steel.

TRUMPETERSTRALE
(*lifting up his glass*).

Ay, Swedish steel——?

(*They clink glasses and drink with him The wine begins to go to his head.*)

MR. COTTON

All this is very good indeed,—
but, sir,¹ I'm curious to know
what with your gold you think of doing.

PEER
(*smiling*)

Hm, doing? Eh?

ALL FOUR
(*coming closer*)
Yes, let us hear!

PEER

Well, first of all, I want to travel
You see, that's why I shipped you four,
to keep me company at Gibraltar
I needed such a dancing-choir
of friends around my gold-calf-altar——

VON EBERKOPF.

Most witty!

¹ So in original.

MR COTTON

Well, but no one hoists
 his sails for nothing but the sailing
 Beyond all doubt, you have a goal,
 and that is——?

PEER.

To be Emperor

ALL FOUR

What?

PEER

(nodding)
 Emperor!
 .

THE FOUR

Where?

PEER

O'er all the world

MONSIEUR BALLON

But how, Mon ami——?

PEER

By the might of gold!
 That plan is not at all a new one,
 it's been the soul of my career
 Even as a boy, I swept in dreams
 far o'er the ocean on a cloud.
 And flopped down on all fours again.
 But still my goal, my friends, stood fast.—
 There is a text, or else a saying,
 somewhere, I don't remember where,
 that if you gained the whole wide world,

but lost *yourself*, your gain were but
a garland on a cloven skull

VON EBERKOPF

But what then is the Gyntish Self?

PEER

The world behind my forehead's arch,
in force of which I'm no one else
than I

TRUMPETERSTRALE

I understand now where you're aiming!

MONSIEUR BALLON

Thinker sublime!

VON EBERKOPF

Exalted poet!

PEER

(*more and more elevated*)

The Gyntish Self—it is the host
of wishes, appetites, desires,—
all that, in short, makes *my* breast heave,
and whereby I, as I, exist
But as our Lord requires the clay
to constitute him God o' the world,
so I, too, stand in need of gold,
if I as Emperor would figure

MONSIEUR BALLON,

You have the gold, though!

PEER

Not enough
 Ay, maybe for a nine-days' flourish,
 But I must be myself *en bloc*,¹
 must be the Gynt of all the planet,
 Sir Gynt¹ throughout, from top to toe!

MONSIEUR BALLON
(enraptured).

Possess the earth's most exquisite beauty!

VON EBERKOPF

And all the century-old Johannisberger!

TRUMPETERSTRALE

And all the blades of Charles the Twelfth!

MR COTTON

But first a profitable opening
 for business—

PEER.

That's already found,
 our anchoring here supplied me with it.
 To-night we set off northward ho!
 The papers I received on board
 have brought me tidings of importance—!
(Rises with uplifted glass)
 It seems that Fortune ceaselessly
 aids him who has the pluck to help himself

THE GUESTS

Well? Tell us—!

¹ So in original

PEER

Greece is in revolt

ALL FOUR

(springing up)

What! Greece——?

PEER

The Greeks have risen in Hellas

THE FOUR

Hurrah!

PEER

And Turkey's in a fix!
(Empties his glass)

MONSIEUR BALLON

To Hellas! Glory's gate stands open!
I'll help them with the sword of France!

VON EBERKOPF.

And I with war-whoops—from a distance

MR. COTTON

And I as well—by taking contracts!

MONSIEUR BALLON

(falling on PEER GYNT'S neck)

Forgive me, friend, that I at first
misjudged you quite!

VON EBERKOPF

(pressing his hands).

I, stupid hound,
took you for next door to a scoundrel!

MR. COTTON

Too strong that, only for a fool——

TRUMPETERSTRALE

(*trying to kiss him*).

I, Uncle, for a specimen
of Yankee riff-raff's meanest spawn——!
Forgive me——!

VON EBERKOPF.

We've been in the dark——

PEER

What stuff is 'this'?

VON EBERKOPF

We now see gathered
in glory all the Gyntish host
of wishes, appetites, and desires——!

MONSIEUR BALLON

(*admiringly*)

So *this* is being Monsieur¹ Gynt!

VON EBERKOPF

(*in the same tone*)

This I call being Gynt with honour!

PEER

But tell me——?

MONSIEUR BALLON

Don't you understand?

¹ So in original.

PEER

May I be hanged if I begin to!

MONSIEUR BALLON

What? Are you not upon your way
to join the Greeks, with ship and money——?

PEER

(contemptuously).

No, many thanks! I side with strength,
and lend my money to the Turks

MONSIEUR BALLON

Impossible!

VON EBERKOPF

Witty, but a jest!

PEER

(after a short silence, leaning on a chair and assuming
a dignified mien)

Come, gentlemen, I think it best
we part before the last remains
of friendship melt away like smoke.
Who nothing owns will lightly risk it
When in the world one scarce possesses
the strip of earth one's shadow covers,
one's born to serve as food for powder
But when a man stands safely landed,
as I do, then his stake is greater.
Go you to Hellas. I will put you
ashore, and arm you gratis too.
The more you fan the flames of strife,
the better will it serve my purpose
Strike home for freedom and for right!

Fight! storm! make hell hot for the Turks,—
and gloriously end your days
upon the Janissaries lances—
But I—excuse me—

(*Slaps his pocket*)

I have cash,
and am myself, Sir Peter Gynt¹

(*Puts up his sunshade, and goes into the grove,
where the hammocks are partly visible.*)

TRUMPETERSTRALE

The swinish cur!

MONSIEUR BALLON

No taste for glory——!

MR. COTTON

Oh, glory's neither here nor there;
but think of the enormous profits
we'd reap if Greece should free herself

MONSIEUR BALLON

I saw myself a conqueror,
by lovely Grecian maids encircled

TRUMPETERSTRALE

Grasped in my Swedish hands, I saw
the great, heroic spur-strap-buckles!

VON EBERKOPF.

I my gigantic Fatherland's
culture saw spread o'er earth and sea——!

¹ So in original

MR COTTON

The worst's the loss in solid cash
 Bah Jove! I can scarce keep from weeping!
 I saw me owner of Olympus

MONSIEUR BALLON

Accurst! So near to fortune's summit,
 and now stopped short beside its grave!

MR COTTON

(*Shakes his fist towards the yacht*)

That long black chest holds coffered up
 the nabob's golden nigger-sweat——!

VON EBERKOPF

A royal notion! Quick! Away!
 It's all up with his empire now!
 Hurrah!

MONSIEUR BALLON

What would you?

VON EBERKOPF

Seize the power!
 The crew can easily be bought
 On board then! I annex the yacht!

MR COTTON.

You—what——?

VON EBERKOPF.

I grab the whole concern!
 (*Goes down to the jolly-boat*)

MR. COTTON.

Why then self-interest commands me
to grab my share

(*Goes after him*)

TRUMPETERSTRALE

What scoundrelism!

MONSIEUR BALLON

A scurvy business—but—*enfin*¹

(*Follows the others*)

TRUMPETERSTRALE

I'll have to follow, I suppose,—
but I protest to all the world—!

(*Follows*)

(*The jolly-boat moves out. Soon it is seen far out at
the yacht which directly moves under full steam*)

(*PEER GYNT comes running along the beach, now pinch-
ing his arms, now gazing out to sea.*)

PEER.

A nightmare!—Delusion!—I'll soon be awake!
She's standing to sea! And at furious speed!—
Mere delusion! I'm sleeping! I'm dizzy and drunk!

(*Clenches his hands.*)

A dream! I'm determined it shall be a dream!
Oh, horror! It's only too real, worse luck!
My brute-beasts of friends—! Do but hear me, oh Lord!
(*With upstretched arms.*)

¹ So in original

² An allusion to the attitude of Sweden during the Danish War of 1863-64, with special reference to the diplomatic notes of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Grev Manderstrom

It is I, Peter¹ Gynt!
 Make them back the machine! Make them lower the gig!
 Stop the robbers! Make something go wrong with the
 rigging!
 Hear me! Let other folk's business lie over!
 The world can take care of itself for the time!—

(*A jet of fire shoots into the air from the yacht, followed by thick clouds of smoke, a hollow report is heard. PEER GYNT utters a cry, and sinks down on the sands. Gradually the smoke clears away, the ship has disappeared*)

PEER

(softly, with a pale face).

That's the sword of wrath!
 In a crack to the bottom, every soul, man and mouse!
 Oh, for ever blest be the lucky chance—

(With emotion)

A chance? No, no, it was more than chance.
 I was to be rescued and they to perish

(Draws a deep breath)

What a marvellous feeling of safety and peace
 it gives one to know oneself specially shielded!
 But the desert! What about food and drink?
 Oh, something I'm sure to find *He'll* see to that
 There's no cause for alarm;—

(Loud and insinuatingly)

He would never allow
 a poor little sparrow like me to perish!

(With a start of terror)

Was that a lion that growled in the reeds?—?
 (His teeth chattering.)

No, it wasn't a lion.

(Mustering up courage)

¹ So in original

A lion, forsooth!

Those beasts, they'll take care to keep out of the way.

They know it's no joke to fall foul of their betters.

They have instinct to guide them,—they feel, what's a fact,
playing with elephants is a dangerous game

But all the same— I must find a tree
If I once can climb up, I'll be sheltered and safe,—
most of all if I knew but a psalm or two

(*Clammers up and seats himself comfortably*)
How blissful to feel so uplifted in spirit
To think nobly is more than to know oneself rich
Only trust in Him

He takes fatherly thought for my personal weal,—

(*Casts a glance over the sea, and whispers with a sigh*)

but economical—no, that he isn't!

I must on! To find capital, eastward or west!

My kingdom—well, half of it, say—for a horse!

(*The horse in the cleft neighs*)
A horse! Ay, and robes!—Jewels too,—and a sword!

(*Goes closer*)

It can't be! It is though—! But how? I have read,
I don't quite know where, that the will can move
mountains,—

but how about moving a horse as well—?

Pooh! Here stands the horse, that's a matter of fact,—
for the rest, why—

(*Puts on the dress and looks down at it.*)
Sir Peter—a Turk, too, from top to toe!

Well, one never knows what may happen to one—

Gee-up, now, Granē, my trusty steed!

(*Mounts the horse*)
You may know the great by their riding-gear!

(*Gallops off into the desert*)

(END OF SCENE FIRST.)

SCENE SECOND

(*The tent of an Arab chief, standing alone on an oasis*)
 (PEER GYNT, in his eastern dress, resting on cushions. He
 is drinking coffee, and smoking a long pipe ANITRA,
 and a bevy of GIRLS, dancing and singing before him)

CHORUS OF GIRLS

The Prophet is come!
 The Prophet, the Lord, the All-Knowing One,
 to us, to us is he come,
 o'er the sand-ocean riding!
 The Prophet, the Lord, the Unerring One,
 to us, to us is he come,
 o'er the sand-ocean riding!

ANITRA.

His charger is white as the milk is
 that flows in the rivers of Paradise
 Bend every knee! Bow every head!
 His eyes are as mild as the soft golden stars.
 Yet none that is earth-born endureth
 the rays of those stars in their splendour!
 He the god-like appeareth
 Kaaba, Kaaba, void and lonely.

THE CHORUS OF GIRLS.

The Prophet, the Prophet is come!
 (They continue the dance, to soft music.)

PEER.

I have read it in print—and the saying is true—
 that no one's a prophet in his native land

This position is very much more to my mind.
 A prophet; ay, that is the thing for me
 And I slipped so utterly unawares into it,—
 just by coming galloping over the desert,
 and meeting these children of nature *en route*
 The Prophet had come to them, so much was clear
 It was really not my intent to deceive——;
 there's a difference 'twixt lies and oracular answers,
 and then I can always withdraw again
 I'm in no way bound; it's a simple matter——;
 the whole thing is private, so to speak,
 I can go as I came; there's my horse ready saddled,
 I am master, in short, of the situation.

ANITRA

(approaching from the tent-door)

Prophet and Master!

PEER.

What would my slave?

ANITRA.

The sons of the desert await at thy tent-door;
 they pray for the light of thy countenance——

PEER.

Stop!

Say in the distance I'd have them assemble,
 say from the distance I hear all their prayers.
 Add that I suffer no men folk near me!Men, my child, are a worthless crew,—
 inveterate rascals you well may call them!
 Anitra, you can't think how shamelessly
 they have swind—— I mean they have sinned, my child!—
 Well, enough now of that, you may dance for me, damsels!
 The Prophet would banish the memories that gall him.

THE GIRLS
(dance).

PEER

(his eyes following ANITRA during the dance)
Anitra, come listen!ANITRA
(approaching)
Thy handmaiden hears!

PEER

You are tempting, my daughter! The Prophet is touched
If you don't believe me, then hear the proof,—
I'll make you a Houri in Paradise!ANITRA
Impossible, Lord!, PEER
What? You think I am jesting?
I'm in sober earnest, as true as I live!ANITRA.
But I haven't a soulPEER
Then of course you must get one!ANITRA.
How, Lord?PEER.
Just leave *me* alone for that;—
I shall look after your education
No soul? Why, truly you're not over bright,

as the saying goes I've observed it with pain
 But pooh! for a soul you can always find room
 Come here! let me measure your brain-pan, child —
 There is room, there is room, I was sure there was
 It's true you never will penetrate
 very deep, to a *large* soul you'll scarcely attain,
 but never you mind, it won't matter a bit,
 you'll have plenty to carry you through with credit —

ANITRA.

The Prophet is gracious —

PEER

You hesitate? Speak!

ANITRA.

But I'd rather —

PEER

Say on, don't waste time about it!

ANITRA.

I don't care so much about having a soul, —
 give me rather —

PEER

What, child?

ANITRA

(pointing to his turban)
 That lovely opal!

PEER

(enchanted, handing her the jewel).

Anitra! Anitra! true daughter of Eve!
 I feel thee magnetic, for I am a man.

And, as a much-esteemed author has phrased it:
"Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan!"¹

PEER GYNT

Go in, child, the prophet would sing to thee.

(Plays and sings He hangs the lute over his shoulder, and comes forward)

Stillness! Is the fair one listening?
Has she heard my little song?
Peeps she from behind the curtain?
Balmy night is made for music,
music is our common sphere,
in the act of singing, we are
we, Peer Gynt and nightingale
But she's coming, I declare!
After all, it's best she should

ANITRA

(from the tent).

Master, call'st thou in the night?

PEER.

Yes indeed, the Prophet calls
Were you wakened by the cat?

ANITRA

Master, jest like honey floweth
from thy lips

PEER

My little friend,
you, like other maidens, judge,
great men by their outsides only.

¹ Ibsen writes "Ziehet uns an" We have ventured to restore the exact wording of Goethe's lines

I am full of jest at heart,
 most of all when we're alone
 I am forced by my position
 to assume a solemn mask
 Duties of the day constrain me,
 all the reckoning and worry
 that I have with one and all,
 make me oft a cross-grained prophet,
 but it's only from the lips out —
 Fudge, avaunt! *En tete-a-tete*
 I'm Peer—well, the man I am
 Hei, away now with the prophet,
 me, myself, you have me here!

(*Seats himself under a tree, and draws her to him*)
 Come, Anitra, we will rest us
 underneath the palm's green fan-shade!

ANITRA

(*lies down at his feet*)

All thy words are sweet as singing,
 though I understand but little
 Master, tell me, can thy daughter
 catch a soul by listening?

PEER.

Soul, and spirit's light and knowledge,
 all in good time you shall have them.
 It's the heart that really matters.

ANITRA

Speak, O Master! When thou speakest,
 I see gleams, as though of opals!

PEER.

Wisdom in extremes is folly,
 coward blossoms into tyrant;

truth, when carried to excess,
ends in wisdom written backwards
Know you what it is to live?

ANITRA

Teach me!

PEER

It is to be wafted
dry-shod down the stream of time,
wholly, solely as oneself
Only in full manhood can I
be the man I am, dear child!
Aged eagle moults his plumage,
aged fogey lags declining,
aged dame has ne'er a tooth left,
aged churl gets withered hands,—
one and all get withered souls
Youth! Ah, youth! I mean to reign,
as a sultan, whole and fiery,—

(ANITRA snores.)

What! She sleeps! Then has it glided
bootless past her, all I've said?—
No, it marks my influence o'er her
that she floats away in dreams
on my love talk as it flows.

ANITRA.

For shame! An old prophet like you——!

PEER

The prophet's not old at all, you goose!
Do you think all this is a sign of age?

Oh, stuff

ANITRA.

Yes, but are you a prophet?

PEER.

Your Emperor I am!
(Tries to kiss her.)

ANITRA.

Give me that ring that you have on your finger.

PEER

Take, sweet Anitra, the whole of the trash!

ANITRA.

Thy words are as songs! Oh, how dulcet their sound!

PEER.

How blessed to know oneself loved to this pitch!
 I'm young, Anitra, bear that in mind!
 You musn't be shocked at my escapades
 Frolics and high-jinks are youth's sole criterion!
 And so, if your intellect weren't so dense,
 you would see at a glance, oh my fair oleander,—
 your lover is frolicsome—*ergo*, he's young!

ANITRA.

Yes, you are young. Have you any more rings?

PEER.

Am I not? There, catch! I can leap like a buck!
 Were there vine-leaves around, I would garland my brow.
 To be sure I am young! Hei, I'm going to dance!

ANITRA

You are perspiring, my prophet; I fear you will melt;
 hand me that heavy bag hung at your belt

PEER.

Tender solicitude! Bear the purse ever,—
 hearts that can love are content without gold!
 (Dances and sings again)

ANITRA.

What joy when the Prophet steps forth in the dance!

PEER.

(Kneels down)

But vouchsafe me a vehement sorrow,—
 to a heart full of love, it is sweet to suffer!
 Listen, as soon as we're home at my castle—.

ANITRA.

In your Paradise,—have we far to ride?

PEER.

Oh, a thousand miles or—

ANITRA

Too far!

PEER

Oh, listen;
 you shall have the soul that I promised you once—

ANITRA.

Oh, thank you, I'll get on without the soul
 But you asked for a sorrow—

PEER.

(rising).

Ay, curse me, I did!
 A keen one, but short,—to last two or three days!

ANITRA.

Anitra obeyeth the Prophet!—Farewell!

(*Gives him a smart cut across the fingers, and dashes off, at a tearing gallop, back across the desert*)

PEER

(*stands for a long time thunderstruck*)

Well now, may I be——!

The hussy,—she was on the very verge
of turning my head clean topsy-turvy

May I be a troll if I understand

what it was that dazed and bemused me so.

Well, it's well that's done had the joke been carried
but one step on, I'd have looked absurd.—

I have erred.—but at least it's a consolation
that my error was due to the false situation.

It wasn't my personal self that fell.

'Twas in fact this prophetical way of life.

It's sorry business this prophetising!

One's office compels one to walk in a mist,
in playing the prophet, you throw up the game¹
the moment you act like a rational being²

In so far I've done what the occasion demanded,

(*Bursts out laughing*)

Hm, to think of it now!

and end, like a rooster,—by getting well plucked!

Such conduct is truly prophetic frenzy.

Yes, plucked!—Phew! I'm plucked clean enough indeed.

Well, well, I've a trifle still left in reserve;

I've a little in America, a little in my pocket,
so I won't be quite driven to beg my bread.—

And at bottom this middle condition is best.

¹ Literally, "you're looed" or "euchred"

² Literally, "behave as though sober and wakeful"

I'm no longer a slave to my coachman and horses;
I haven't to fret about postchaise or baggage,
I am master, in short, of the situation —
What path should I choose? Many paths lie before me,
and a wise man is known from a fool by his choice
My business life is a finished chapter,
my love-sports, too, are a cast-off garment
There lies the Turk, then, and here stand I
These heathenish songs are no sort of good!
It's lucky 'twas only a matter of clothes
And not, as the saying goes, bred in the bone
What tempted me into that galley at all?

(Enter *Girls singing*)

(END OF ACT FOURTH)

ACT FIFTH.

SCENE FIRST

(*A vision. A hut in the Norwegian forest. The door, with a large wooden bar, stands open. Reindeer-horns over it.*)

(*SOLVEIG now middle-aged, fair-haired and comely, sits spinning outside in the sunshine.*)

SOLVEIG

(*glances down the path, and sings*)

Maybe both the winter and spring will pass by,
and the next summer too, and the whole of the year,—
but thou wilt come one day, that know I full well;
and I will await thee, as I promised of old

(*Spins, and sings again.*)

God strengthen thee, whereso thou goest in the world!
God gladden thee, if at his footstool thou stand!
Here will I await thee till thou comest again,
and if thou wait up yonder, then there we'll meet, my
friend!

(END OF SCENE FIRST.)

SCENE SECOND

(On board a ship on the North Sea, off the Norwegian coast. Stormy weather.)

(PEER GYNT, a vigorous old man, with grizzled hair and beard, is standing aft on the poop. His clothing is rather the worse for wear, he himself is weather-beaten, and has a somewhat harder expression. The CAPTAIN is standing beside the steersman at the wheel. The crew are forward.)

THE CAPTAIN

(shouts forward)

Two hands to the wheel, and the lantern aloft!

PEER

It's blowing up stiff—

THE CAPTAIN

—For a gale tonight

PEER

Shall we get in by day-break?

THE CAPTAIN

Thereabouts,
if we don't have too dirty a night altogether

PEER.

It grows thick in the west.

THE CAPTAIN.

It does so

PEER

Stop a bit!

You might put me in mind when we make up accounts—
I'm inclined, as the phrase goes, to do a good turn
to the crew—

THE CAPTAIN.

I thank you

PEER

It won't be much
I have dug for gold, and lost what I found,—
we are quite at loggerheads, Fate and I.

THE CAPTAIN

It's more than enough, though, to make you of weight
among people at home here.

PEER

I've no relations
There's no one awaiting the rich old curmudgeon—
Well, that saves you, at least, any scenes on the pier!

THE CAPTAIN

Here comes the storm.

PEER.

Well, remember then—
If any of your crew are in real need,
I won't look too closely after the money—

THE CAPTAIN.

That's kind. They are most of them ill enough off;
they have all got their wives and their children at home.

PEER

What do you say? Have they wives and children?
Are they married?

THE CAPTAIN.

Married? Ay, every man of them

PEER.

Married? They've folks that await them at home?
Folks to be glad when they come? Eh?

THE CAPTAIN.

Of course,
in poor people's fashion

PEER.

And come they one evening,
what then?

THE CAPTAIN.

Why, I daresay the housewife will fetch
something good for a treat——

PEER.

And a light in the sconce?

THE CAPTAIN.

Ay, ay, may be two, and a dram to their supper.

PEER.

And there they sit snug! There's a fire on the hearth!
They've their children about them! The room's full of
chatter;
not one hears another right out to an end,
for the joy that is on them——!

THE CAPTAIN.

It's likely enough

So it's really kind, as you promised just now,
to help eke things out

PEER

(*thumping the bulwark*)

I'll be damned if I do!

Do you think I am mad? Would you have me fork out
for the sake of a parcel of other folks' brats?
I've slaved much too sorely in earning my cash!
There's nobody waiting for old Peer Gynt

THE CAPTAIN

Well, well, as you please then, your money's your own.
But excuse me, the wind's blowing up to a gale.

(*He goes forward. It has fallen dark, lights are
lit in the cabin. The sea increases. Fog and
thick clouds.*)

PEER.

To have a whole bevy of youngsters at home,—
to have others' thoughts follow you still on your path!—
There's never a soul gives a thought to me.
Lights in the sconces! I'll put out those lights.
I will hit upon something!—I'll make them all drunk,—
not one of the devils shall go sober ashore.
They shall all come home drunk to their children and wives!
They shall curse; bang the table till it rings again,—
they shall scare those that wait for them out of their wits!
The goodwife shall scream and rush forth from the house,—
clutch her children along! All their joy gone to ruin!

(*The ship gives a heavy lurch; he staggers and
keeps his balance with difficulty*)

Why, that was a buffet and no mistake.
 The sea's hard at labour, as though it were paid for it;—
 (Listens)
 Why, what can those screams be?

THE LOOK-OUT
 (forward)
 A wreck a-lee!

THE CAPTAIN
 (on the main deck, shouts).
 Helm hard a-starboard! Bring her up to the wind!

THE MATE
 Are there men on the wreck?

THE LOOK-OUT
 I can just see three!

PEER.
 Quick! lower the stern boat—

THE CAPTAIN.
 She'd fill ere she floated
 (Goes forward)

PEER.
 Who can think of that now?
 (To some of the crew)
 If you're men, to the rescue!

THE BOATSWAIN.
 It's out of the question in such a sea

PEER.
 They are screaming again! There's a lull in the wind.—
 Cook, will you risk it? Quick! I will pay—

THE COOK

No, not if you offered me twenty pounds-sterling——

PEER

You hounds! You chicken-hearts! Can you forget
these are men that have goodwives and children at home?
There they're sitting and waiting——

THE MATE

There the wreck turned over!

PEER

All is silent of a sudden——!

(*The storm increases PEER GYNT moves away aft.*)
There is no faith left among men any more,—
no Christianity,—well may they say it and write it,
their good deeds are few and their prayers are still fewer,
and they pay no respect to the Powers above them.

THE STRANGE PASSENGER

(*stands in the darkness at PEER GYNT'S side, and salutes
him in friendly fashion*)

Good evening!

PEER.

Good evening! What .? Who are you?

THE PASSENGER.

Your fellow-passenger, at your service.

PEER.

Indeed? I thought I was the only one

THE PASSENGER.

A mistaken impression, which now is set right.

PEER.

But it's singular that, for the first time to-night,
I should see you——

THE PASSENGER

I never come out in the day-time.

PEER

Perhaps you are ill? You're as white as a sheet——

THE PASSENGER.

No, thank you——my health is uncommonly good

PEER

What a raging storm!

THE PASSENGER

Ay, a blessed one, man!

PEER

A blessed one?

THE PASSENGER

Just think of the wrecks that to-night will be shattered;—
and think, too, what corpses will drive ashore!

PEER

God save us!

THE PASSENGER

The corpses all laugh But their laughter is forced;
and the most part are found to have bitten their tongues.

PEER

Hold off from me——!

THE PASSENGER

Only one question pray!
If we, for example, should strike on a rock,
and sink in the darkness
But suppose, now, I float and you go to the bottom——

PEER

Oh, rubbish——

THE PASSENGER.

It's just a hypothesis.
But when one is placed with one foot in the grave,
one grows soft-hearted and open-handed——

PEER

(puts his hand in his pocket).

Ho, money!

THE PASSENGER.

No, no, but perhaps you would kindly
make me a gift of your much-esteemed carcass——?

PEER.

This is *too* much!

THE PASSENGER.

No more than your body, you know!
To help my researches in science——

PEER.

Away with you!

THE PASSENGER.

Why, my dear sir—a drowned corpse——!

PEER

Blasphemer! You're goading the rage of the storm!

THE PASSENGER

You're in no mood, I see, to negotiate further,
but time, you know, brings with it many a change—
(*Nods in a friendly fashion*)

We'll meet when you're sinking, if not before,
perhaps I may then find you more in the humour.

(*Goes into the cabin*)

PEER.

Unpleasant companions these scientists are!
With their freethinking ways—

(*To the BOATSWAIN, who is passing.*)

Hark, a word with you, friend!
That passenger? What crazy creature is he?

THE BOATSWAIN.

I know of no passenger here but yourself

PEER

No others? This thing's getting worse and worse.

(*To the SHIP'S BOY, who comes out of the cabin.*)
Who went down the companion just now?

THE BOY.

The ship's dog, sir!

(*Passes on*)

THE LOOK-OUT

(*shouts*).

Land close ahead!

PEER.

Where's my box? Where's my trunk?
 All the baggage on deck!

THE BOATSWAIN.

We have more to attend to!

THE CAPTAIN

The jib's blown away!

THE MATE

And there went the foresail!

THE BOATSWAIN

(*shrieks from forward*)

Breakers under the bow!

THE CAPTAIN

She will go to shivers!

(*The ship strikes and breaks to pieces Noise and confusion*)

(*PEER GYNT comes to the surface near the boat*)

PEER.

Help! Help! A boat! Help! I'll be drowned!
 Save me, oh Lord—as saith the text!

(*Clutches hold of the boat's keel.*)

THE COOK

(*comes up at his side*).

Oh, Lord God—for my children's sake,
 have mercy! Let me reach the land!

(*Seizes hold of the keel.*)

PEER

Let go!

THE COOK

Let go!

PEER

I'll strike!

THE COOK

So'll I!

PEER

I'll crush you down with kicks and blows!
Let go your hold! She won't float two!

THE COOK

I know it! Yield!

PEER

Yield you!

THE COOK.

Oh yes!

*(They fight, one of the cook's hands is disabled; he
clings on with the other)*

PEER

Off with that hand!

THE COOK.

Oh, kind sir—spare!

Think of my little ones at home!

PEER

I need my life far more than you,
for I am lone and childless still.

THE COOK.

Let go! You've lived, and I am young!

PEER

Quick, haste you, sink,—you drag us down.

THE COOK.

Have mercy! Yield in heaven's name!
There's none to miss and mourn for you—
(*His hand slips, he screams*)
I'm drowning!

PEER

(*seizing him*)

By this wisp of hair
I'll hold you, say your Lord's Prayer, quick!

THE COOK

I can't remember, it all turns black——

PEER.

Come, the essentials in a word——!

THE COOK

Give me this day——!

PEER.

Skip that part, Cook;
you'll get all *you* need, safe enough.

THE COOK

Give us this day——

PEER.

The same old song!
 One sees you were a cook in life—
 (The COOK slips from his grasp.)

THE COOK

(sinking)

Give us this day our—
 (Disappears.)

PEER

Amen, lad!
 To the last gasp you were yourself
 (Draws himself up on to the bottom of the boat.)
 So long as there is life there's hope—

THE STRANGE PASSENGER
 (catches hold of the boat)

Good morning!

PEER.

Hoy!

THE PASSENGER

I heard you shout—
 It's pleasant finding you again.
 Well? So my prophecy came true!

PEER.

Let go! Let go! 'Twill scarce float *one*!

THE PASSENGER

I'll float, if only with their tips
 my fingers rest upon this ledge.
 But apropos: your body—

PEER

Hush!

THE PASSENGER

The rest of course, is done for, clean——

PEER.

No more!

THE PASSENGER

Exactly as you please
(*Silence.*)

' PEER

Well?

THE PASSENGER

I am silent

PEER

Satan's tricks!—

What now?

THE PASSENGER

I'm waiting

PEER

(*tearing his hair*).

I'll go mad!—

What are you?

THE PASSENGER

(*nods*).

Friendly.

PEER.

What else? Speak!

THE PASSENGER

What think you? Do you know none other
that's like me?

PEER

Do I know the devil——?

THE PASSENGER

(in a low voice).

Is it his way to light a lantern
for life's night-pilgrimage through fear?
Ay, have you gained but *once* in life
the victory that is given in dread?

PEER

(looks at him)

Came you to ope for me a door,
'twas stupid not to come before
What sort of sense is there in choosing
your time when seas gape to devour one?

THE PASSENGER

Were, then, the victory more likely
beside your hearth-stone, snug and quiet?

PEER.

Avaunt thee, bugbear! Man, begone!
I will not die! I *must* ashore!

THE PASSENGER.

Oh, as for that, be reassured,—
(Glides away.)

(END OF SCENE SECOND)

SCENE THIRD

(Norway *An auction is in progress among the peasants near SOLVEIG'S hut*)

ASLAK, (*now dressed in mourning*)
Now there is only rubbish left over

A LAD OF TWENTY
(*with a casting-ladle*)

Just look what a rare thing I've been buying!
In this Peer Gynt cast his silver buttons.

ANOTHER

Look at mine, though! The money-bag bought for a half-penny

A MAN IN GREY.

Come, kinsman! A dram, for our kinship's sake!

ASLAK.

To the deuce with your kinship! You're maundering in drink—

THE MAN IN GREY.

Oh, rubbish; blood's never so thin as all that;
one cannot but feel one's akin to Peer Gynt
(*Goes off with him*)

A LAD

(with a bear's skin).

Look, the cat of the Dovie! Well, only his fell
 It was he chased the trolls out on Christmas Eve

ANOTHER

(with a reindeer-skull)

Here is the wonderful reindeer that bore,
 at Gendin, Peer Gynt over edge and scaur

A THIRD

(with a hammer, calls out to the MAN IN MOURNING)

Hei, Aslak, this sledge-hammer, say, do you know it?
 Was it this that you used when the devil clove the wall?

A FOURTH

(empty-handed).

Here's the invisible cloak
 Peer Gynt and Ingrid flew off through the air with

PEER

(Enters from behind the crowd He is grown quite old
 Brandy here, boys! I feel I'm grown old,—
 I must put up to auction my rubbish and lumber!

A LAD.

What have you to sell, then?

PEER

A palace I have;—
 it lies in the Ronde, it's solidly built.

THE LAD.

A button is bid!

PEER

You must run to a dram.
 'Twere a sin and a shame to bid anything less

ANOTHER

He's a jolly old boy this!
 (The bystanders crowd around him)

PEER

(shouts).

Grane,¹ my steed,
 who bids?

ONE OF THE CROWD
 Where's he running?

PEER

Why, far in the west!
 Near the sunset, my lads! Ah, that courser can fly
 as fast, ay, as fast as Peer Gynt could lie

VOICES.

What more have you got?

PEER

I've both rubbish and gold!
 I bought it with ruin, I'll sell it at a loss

A LAD

Put it up!

PEER

A dream of a silver-clasped book!
 That you can have for an old hook and eye

¹ See footnote, p 101

THE LAD

To the devil with dreams!

PEER

Here's my Kaiserdom!
I throw it in the midst of you, scramble for it!

THE LAD

Is the crown given in?

PEER

Of the loveliest straw.
It will fit whoever first puts it on
Hei, there is more yet! An addled egg!
A madman's grey hair! And the Prophet's beard!
All these shall be his that will show on the hillside
a post that has writ on it Here lies your path!

THE BAILIFF

(who has come up).

You're carrying on, my good man, so that almost
I think that your path will lead straight to the lock-up

PEER

(hat in hand).

Quite likely. But, tell me, who was Peer Gynt?

THE BAILIFF.

Oh, nonsense—

PEER.

Your pardon! Most humbly I beg——!

THE BAILIFF.

Oh, he's said to have been an abominable liar——¹¹ "Digter", means also "poet"

PEER.

A liar—?

THE BAILIFF

Yes—all that was strong and great
 he made believe always that *he* had done it
 But, excuse me, friend—I have other duties—

(Goes)

PEER

And where is he now, this remarkable man?

AN ELDERLY MAN

He fared over seas to a foreign land;
 it went ill with him there, as one well might foresee,—
 it's many a year now since he was hanged

PEER

Hanged? Ay, ay! Why, I thought as much,
 our lamented Peer Gynt was himself to the last
 (Bows)

Good-bye,—and best thanks for to-day's merry meeting
 (Goes a few steps, but stops again.)

You joyous youngsters, you comely lasses,—
 shall I pay my shot with a traveller's tale?

SEVERAL VOICES.

Yes, do you know any?

PEER.

Nothing more easy—

(*He comes nearer, a look of strangeness comes over him.*)

I was gold-digging once in San Francisco.
 There were mountebanks swarming all over the town

One with his toes could perform on the fiddle,
 another could dance a Spanish halling¹ on his knees,
 a third I was told, kept on making verses
 while his brain-pan was having a hole bored right through it
 To the mountebank-meeting came also the devil,—
 thought he'd try his luck with the rest of them
 His talent was this in a manner convincing,
 he was able to grunt like a flesh-and-blood pig
 He was not recognised, yet his manners² attracted
 The house was well filled, expectation ran high.
 He stepped forth in a cloak with an ample cape to it,
man muss sich drappren, as the Germans say.
 But under the mantle—what none suspected—
 he'd managed to smuggle a real live pig.
 And now he opened the representation,
 the devil he pinched, and the pig gave voice.
 The whole thing purported to be a fantasia
 on the porcine existence, both free and in bonds,
 and all ended up with a slaughter-house squeal—
 whereupon the performed bowed low and retired.—
 The critics discussed and appraised the affair,
 the tone of the whole was attacked and defended.
 Some fancied the vocal expression too thin,
 while some thought the death-shriek too carefully studied,
 but all were agreed as to one thing. *qua* grunt,
 the performance was grossly exaggerated —

(The crowd goes off laughing.)

*(He has come near to the hut, he catches sight of it
 and starts)*

This hut? On the heath——! Ha!

(Rubs his eyes.)

It seems exactly
 as though I had known this same building before.—
 The reindeer-horns jutting above the gable!—

¹ See footnote, p 29

In the original, "Personlighed"—personality.

A mermaid, shaped like a fish from the navel!—
 Lies! there's no mermaid! But nails—and planks,—
 bars too, to shut out hobgoblin thoughts!—
 One that's remembered,—and one that's forgot.
 One that has squandered,—and one that has saved—
 Oh, earnest!—and never can the game be played o'er!
 Oh, dread!—*There was my Kaiserdom!*

(THE BUTTON-MOULDER with a box of tools, and a large casting-ladle, comes from a side path)

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Well met, old gaffer!

PEER

Good evening, friend

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

The man's in a hurry Why, where is he going?

PEER

To a grave-feast.

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Excuse me,—your name doesn't chance to be Peer?

PEER

Peer Gynt, as the saying is

THE BUTTON-MOULDER.

That I call luck!

It's precisely Peer Gynt I am sent for to-night

PEER

You're sent for? What do you want?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Why, see here,
I'm a button-moulder You're to go into my ladle

PEER.

And what to do there?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

To be melted up

PEER.

To be melted?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Your grave is dug ready, your coffin bespoke
But I have orders, without delay,
on Master's behalf to fetch in your soul

PEER.

It can't be! Like this, without any warning——!

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

It's an old tradition at burials and births
to appoint in secret the day of the feast,
with no warning at all to the guest of honour.

PEER.

Ay, ay, that's true All my brain's awhirl.
You are——?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER.

Why, I told you—a button-moulder.

PEER

I'm sure I deserve better treatment than this;—
 I'm not nearly so bad as perhaps you think,—
 I've done a good deal of good in the world,—
 at worst you may call me a sort of a bungler,—
 but certainly not an exceptional sinner.

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Why that is precisely the rub, my man;
 you're no sinner at all in the higher sense;
 that's why you're excused all the torture-pangs,
 and land, like others, in the casting-ladle

PEER

You're surely not meaning to melt me up,
 with Dick, Tom, and Harry, into something new?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER.

That's just what I do mean, and nothing else
 We've done it already to plenty of folks.

PEER.

No, I say! No! With both teeth and claws
 I'll fight against this! Sooner anything else!

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Bless me, my dear Peer, there is surely no need
 to get so wrought up about trifles like this
 Yourself you never have been at all,—
 Then what does it matter, your dying right out?

PEER.

At least give me time!

THE BUTTON-MOULDER.

What good would that do you?

PEER

I'll use it to prove
that I've been myself all the days of my life,
and that's the question that's in dispute.

THE BUTTON-MOULDER.

You'll prove it? And how?

PEER

Why, by vouchers and witnesses

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

I'm sadly afraid Master will not accept them.

PEER

Impossible! However, enough for the day—!
My dear man, allow me a loan of myself.

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Very well then, so be it
But remember, we meet at the next cross-roads
(*He departs*)

PEER.

If I only knew where the cross-roads are;—
they may be near and they may be far.
The earth burns beneath me like red-hot iron.

A witness! A witness! Oh, where shall I find one?

(*An old man, bent with age, with a staff in his hand
and a bag on his back, trudges in. He is the
King of the Dovre Trolls met in Act II. He
has come on hard times*)

THE OLD MAN
(stops).

Dear, kind sir—a trifle to a houseless soul!

PEER

Excuse me, I've got no small change in my pocket——

THE OLD MAN
(Recognizing Peer.)

Prince Peer! Oh, to think we should meet again——!

PEER

Who are you?

THE OLD MAN
You forget the Old Man in the Ronde?

PEER.

Why, you're never——?

THE OLD MAN
The King of the Dovre, my boy!

PEER

The Dovre-King? Really? The Dovré-King? Speak!

THE OLD MAN

Oh, I've come terribly down in the world——!

PEER.

Ruined?

THE OLD MAN.

Ay, plundered of every stiver.
Here am I tramping it, starved as a wolf.

PEER

Ah! Such a witness doesn't grow on the trees!

THE OLD MAN

My Lord Prince, too, has grizzled a bit since we met.

PEER

I've something quite different troubling my mind --
I've got into rather a ticklish position,
and am greatly in need of a witness or voucher, —

THE OLD MAN

You don't say so, can I be of use to his Highness?
You'll give me a character, then, in return?

PEER.

No doubt you remember
that night I came to the Ronde a-wooing —

THE OLD MAN.

Why, of course, my Lord Prince!

PEER

Oh, no more of the Prince!
But no matter. You wanted, by sheer brute force,
to bias my sight, with a slit in the lens,
and to change me about from Peer Gynt to a troll.
What did I do then? I stood out against it, —
swore I would stand on no feet but my own,
love, power, and glory at once I renounced,
and all for the sake of remaining myself
Now this fact, you see, you must swear to in Court —

THE OLD MAN

No, I'm blest if I can.

PEER

What rubbish is this?

THE OLD MAN

When you left the Ronde,
you inscribed my motto upon your 'scutcheon.¹

PEER

What motto?

THE OLD MAN

The potent and sundering word

PEER

The word?

THE OLD MAN

That which severs the whole race of men
from the troll-folk *Troll! To thyself be enough!*

PEER

A hill-troll? I?

THE OLD MAN.

Yes, that's perfectly clear.

PEER

Peer Gynt—a troll? Why it's rubbish! It's stuff!
Good-bye! There's a halfpenny to buy you tobacco

THE OLD MAN

Nay, my good Prince Peer!

¹ Literally, "Wrote my motto behind your ear"

PEER

Let me go! You're mad,
 or else doting Off to the hospital with you!
 My man, you have got on the wrong scent entirely,
 I'm myself, as the saying goes, fairly cleaned out!—

THE OLD MAN

So there came my hope toppling down from its perch again!
 Good-bye! I had best struggle on to the town!—

PEER

What would you do there?

THE OLD MAN

I will go to the theatre
 The papers are clamoring for national talents!—

PEER.

Good luck on your journey, and greet them from me
 If I can but get free, I will go the same way.
 A farce I will write them, a mad and profound one,
 its name shall be "Sic transit gloria mundi."
 (The OLD MAN departs.)
 Now comes the pinch, Peer, as never before!
 This Dovrish *Enough* has passed judgment upon you
 (A LEAN PERSON, in a priest's cassock with a birding-
 net over his shoulder, comes along)

PEER

Who goes there? A priest with a fowling-net!
 Good evening, Herr Pastor! the path is bad!—

¹ Literally, "On a naked hill"

THE LEAN ONE.

Ah yes, but what wouldn't one do for a soul?

PEER

Aha! then there's some one bound heavenwards?

THE LEAN ONE.

I hope he is taking a different road

No,

PEER

May I walk with Herr Pastor a bit of the way?

THE LEAN ONE.

With pleasure, I'm partial to company

PEER

I should like to consult you——

THE LEAN ONE.

Heraus! Go ahead!

PEER

You see here before you a good sort of man
The laws of the state I have strictly observed,
and from sinning wholesale I have ever refrained

THE LEAN ONE.

Oh then, my dear fellow, pray leave me in peace;—
I'm not the person you seem to think me—
You look at my fingers? What see you in them?

PEER

A nail cultivation somewhat extremely developed

THE LEAN ONE.

And now? You are casting a glaré at my feet?

PEER

(pointing)

That's a natural hoof?

THE LEAN ONE

So I flatter myself

PEER

(raises his hat).

I'd have taken my oath you were simply a parson,
and I find I've the honour——

THE LEAN ONE.

Your hand! You appear to be free from prejudice
Say on then, my friend, in what way can I serve you?

PEER

If it were not too much to ask,
I should like——

THE LEAN ONE.

A harbour of refuge? eh?

PEER.

You've guessed my petition before I have asked.

THE LEAN ONE.

But, my dear——

PEER

My demands are in no way excessive
 I shouldn't insist on a salary,
 but treatment as friendly as things will permit.

THE LEAN ONE

A fire in your room?

PEER

Not too much fire,—and chiefly
 the power of departing in safety and peace,—
 the right, as the phrase goes, of freely withdrawing.

THE LEAN ONE

My dear friend, I vow I'm sincerely distressed,
 but you cannot imagine how many petitions
 of similar purport good people send in
 It reminds me that I must be hurrying on,—
 I'm after a roast that I hope will prove fat,
 so I really mustn't stand gossiping here—
 The name's Peter¹ Gynt

PEER.

Peter Gynt? Indeed?
 Is Herr Gynt himself?

THE LEAN ONE.

Yes, he vows he is.

PEER.

Well, he's one to be trusted, that same Herr Lett.

¹ So in original

THE LEAN ONE

You know him, perhaps?

PEER

Oh yes, after a fashion,—
one knows all sorts of people

THE LEAN ONE

I'm pressed for time;
where saw you him last?

PEER

It was down at the Cape of Good Hope

THE LEAN ONE.

I must hurry off then without delay
I only hope I may catch him in time

CHURCH-GOERS

(heard singing on the forest path).

PEER

(Tries to slink in among the bushes, but comes
upon the Button-Moulder, who intercepts
him.

THE BUTTON-MOULDER.

Good morning, Peer Gynt! Where's the list of your sins?

PEER.

Do you think that I haven't been whistling and shouting
as hard as I could?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

And met no one at all?

PEER

Not a soul but a tramping lodging-house keeper

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Well, the respite is over

PEER

Ay, everything's over
The owl smells the daylight Just list to the hooting!

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

It's the matin-bell ringing——

PEER

(pointing).

What's that shining yonder?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Only light from a hut

PEER.

And that wailing sound——?

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

But a woman singing

PEER

Ay, there—there I'll find
the list of my sins——

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

(seizing him)

Set your house in order!

PEER

Set my house in order? It's there! Away!
 Get you gone! Though your ladle were huge as a coffin,
 it were too small, I tell you, for me and my sins!

THE BUTTON-MOULDER

Well, to the third cross-road, Peer, but then——!
 (Turns aside and goes)

PEER

(approaches the hut)

Forward and back, and it's just as far
 Out and in, and it's just as strait

(Stops)

No!—like a wild, an unending lament,
 is the thought to come back, to go in, to go home.

(Takes a few steps on, but stops again.)
 Round about, said the Boyg!

(Hears singing in the hut.)

Ah no, this time at least
 right through, though the path may be never so strait!

(He runs towards the hut, at the same moment
 SOLVEIG appears in the doorway, dressed for
 church, with a psalm-book wrapped in a kerchief,
 and a staff in her hand. She stands there erect
 and mild.)

PEER

(flings himself down on the threshold)
 Hast thou doom for a sinner, then speak it forth!

SOLVEIG

He is here! He is here! Oh, to God be the praise!
 (Stretches out her arms as though groping for him)

PEER

Cry out all my sins and my trespasses!

SOLVEIG

In nought hast thou sinned, oh my own only boy
 (Gropes for him again, and finds him)

THE BUTTON-MOULDER
 (behind the house).

The sin-list, Peer Gynt?

PEER

Cry aloud my crime!

SOLVEIG

(sits down beside him).

Thou hast made all my life as a beautiful song
 Blessed be thou that at last thou hast come!
 Blessed, thrice blessed our Whitsun-morn meeting!

PEER

I am lost!

SOLVEIG

There is one that rules all things.

PEER
 (laughs).

Lost! Unless thou canst answer riddles.
 Canst thou tell where Peer Gynt has been since we parted?

SOLVEIG

Been?

PEER

With his destiny's seal on his brow,
 Canst thou tell me? If not, I must
 go down to the mist-shrouded regions

SOLVEIG

(smiling)

Oh, that riddle is easy

PEER

Then tell what thou knowest!
 Where was I, as myself, as the whole man, the true man?
 Where was I, with God's seal upon my brow?

SOLVEIG

In my faith, in my hope, and in my love

PEER

(starts back).

What sayest thou——? Peace! These are juggl^hng words.
 Thou art mother thyself to the boy in thy heart.

SOLVEIG

Ay, that I am, but who is his father?
 Surely he that forgives at the mother's prayer,

PEER

(a light shines in his face, he cries)

My mother, my wife; oh, thou innocent woman!—
 in thy love—oh, there hide me, hide me!

(Clings to her and hides his face in her lap A
 long silence The sun rises)

SOLVEIG

(sings softly)

Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!
I will cradle thee, I will watch thee——

The boy has been sitting on his mother's lap
They two have been playing all the life-day long

The boy has been resting at his mother's breast
all the life-day long God's blessing on my joy!

The boy has been lying close in to my heart
all the life-day long He is weary now

Sleep thou, dearest boy of mine!
I will cradle thee, I will watch thee

THE BUTTON-MOULDER'S VOICE

(behind the house)

We'll meet at the last cross-road again, Peer,
and *then* we'll see whether——, I say no more

SOLVEIG

(sings louder in the full daylight)

I will cradle thee, I will watch thee,
Sleep and dream thou, dear my boy!

THE END